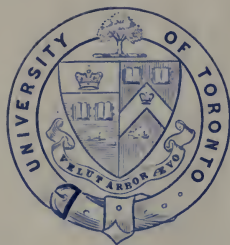


PROPHETS  
OF THE  
CENTURY

EDITED BY  
ARTHUR  
RICKETT



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PROPHETS  
OF THE  
CENTURY.



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# PROPHETS OF THE CENTURY

Essays . . . Edited by  
Arthur Rickett M.A., LL.B.



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## Preface

THE aim of the following essays is to present in a popular form the teaching of those master spirits of the age, whose ideas have helped so largely to influence the minds of men in this century. The treatment adopted has been expository rather than critical, to meet the need of those who, before entering upon a study of the writers dealt with in this volume, wish to know something of their message.

ARTHUR RICKETT.

9, OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE MANSIONS,  
LONDON, W.

*October, 1898.*



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## Wordsworth

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH died nearly fifty years ago. His influence upon his countrymen and women as a poet, absolutely *nil* at first, barely discernible for a long period, then supreme for a space, and now, though probably neither profound nor extensive, exercising benign sway over many minds, is part of our intellectual life, and an inalienable factor in our national consciousness. And yet there are few poets with any claim to the position that he holds, about whom there are so many differences of opinion as Wordsworth has called forth. Matthew Arnold, for instance, believed "that the poetical performance of Wordsworth is, after that of Shakespeare and Milton, of which all the world now recognises the worth, undoubtedly the most considerable in our language from the Elizabethan age to the present time." It was, perhaps, a merely superficial inconsistency on Arnold's part that he accompanied this eulogy with a volume of selections from the works of Wordsworth, which were all he thought well to issue in proof of it. The great bulk of the work he omitted because he did not imagine it redounded to Wordsworth's credit, or established his right to the title of poet at all. Mr. John Morley, in an essay on Wordsworth, wherein he is very cautious of praise or blame, agrees with Arnold that, "to be receivable as a classic, Wordsworth must be relieved of a great deal of the poetical baggage that now encumbers him." It might seem that Mr. Morley does not wish Wordsworth to be receivable as a classic; he prefixes his essay to a complete edition of the poet's works. He

gives us all, despite the fact that, "besides being prolix, Wordsworth is often cumbrous, has often no flight, is not liquid, is not musical." Good reasons for not reading him, if they stood alone. Mr. Swinburne does not care for him, and speaks his mind with characteristic vigour. Against this there may be put Mr. Stopford Brooke's words, "His work has become what he desired it to be—a power like one of Nature's." And the author of the noteworthy biography in the "English Men of Letters" series, mentions Plato, Dante and Wordsworth as alike in greatness.

These are a few modern judgments. We need not concern ourselves with others; with the savage onslaughts of the critics of Wordsworth's early years, with the sneers and jibes and jokes levelled at him in his middle age, or with the panegyrics that in his old age poured upon him. Before he died, Wordsworth had become a "cult," pilgrims from the world over visited him, and counted themselves blessed that they had spoken with him; his works were a religion and—what does not inevitably follow—an inspiration. Some of the rarest spirits of the time were encouraged and consoled by his writings, which were as a message from the heart of Nature to the troubled souls of men. Girt around with the reverence of his devotees, Wordsworth has not escaped the danger of his elevation. The question is still discussed, Was he or was he not a great poet? There is a notable tendency in these days to regard him more and more from the ethical point of view; to forget or ignore his poetry as poetry, and to approach him for what he taught. Tennyson, whose advent destroyed Wordsworth's supremacy in popular esteem, "had a hearty admiration for Wordsworth, the purity and nobility of whose teaching he highly revered." That is, he admired the teacher, not the poet. And for this point of view we have the authority of Wordsworth himself. Early in his career, he took morality for his theme, and constituted himself as the preacher of it. It was to inculcate the principles upon which a righteous life may be led, to

draw attention to the methods he considered the best to put those principles into operation, that he wrote. He did not write as Keats wrote, for the passion for pure poetry, and nothing else. The lines of Keats—

“Beauty is truth, truth beauty—that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know,”

would not have satisfied Wordsworth. This was his purpose: “To console the afflicted, to add sunshine to daylight by making the happy happier; to teach the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think, and feel, and therefore to become more actively and sincerely virtuous.” No one will deny the nobleness of this, but such a purpose is not peculiar to Wordsworth; no writer in these islands since the days of Chaucer has been without it. The realisation of it has differed according to the genius and the temperament of each author; but the glory of our literature is that it has bettered and not debased life. Of course, the moral idea that runs through our literature is more frequently implied than insisted on in words; it is apparent in the thought, the tone and atmosphere, the outlook upon life, the treatment of subject, the selection of incident and environment, in style and art, rather than in set phrases and declarations. Our literature has had Nature for a model, tempered by the national predilection for a moral. Nature is a teacher who demonstrates, but does not speak; the lesson is there for us to learn as best we can. Wordsworth studied the lesson, patiently and lovingly. What it taught him he transmits to us. From his writings have been drawn codes of morality, a system of philosophy. But for a settled, formal philosophy, one must go to a philosopher, not to a poet. The true poet, surely, is no cut-and-dried philosopher; we know for a certainty that the true philosopher is no poet. Prose is the vehicle of the philosopher; reason,—cold, rigid, calculating, is the medium in which, through which, his theories are proved, and a life’s experience yields him his foundations. He widens the circle of

thought, but he is of use chiefly to his own generation; his message is to his own time. It forms a part of the race's intellectual endowment; his truth, if it be truth, is a limited truth. If his words be read by those who come after him, they are read with the interest of curiosity merely, not with the eagerness to know.

How different with the poet! He interprets life in a flash; truth is his by inspiration; his is

"That blessed mood  
In which the burden of the mystery,  
In which the heavy and the weary weight  
Of all this unintelligible world  
Is lightened."

Insight is his, and the miraculous intuition of genius. "Poets are never young in one sense. Their delicate ear hears the far-off whispers of Eternity, which coarser souls must travel towards for scores of years before their dull sense is touched by them. A moment's insight is sometimes worth a life's experience." If, as Wordsworth held, poetry is the first and last of all knowledge, it is as immortal as the heart of man; and, as Plato said, poets utter great and wise things which they do not themselves understand; we must listen to them as men sanctified, not by any earthly canonisation, but by their being the voices of the Spirit that is the secret and source of all things. Their utterances are for ever, their truth is permanent. They are prophets. Conditioned by their humanity, their accents vary, but what they have to tell us is ultimately, in its higher issues, the same. We have the gracious serenity of Shakespeare, the turbulent existence of Burns—men different in genius, in every accident of life, but alike in this, that they both were poets.

Undoubtedly, after all deductions and qualifications have been granted, Wordsworth is one of the hierarchs of mankind. From whichever side we consider him, his title is valid. From the literary side, the technical side, he is weakest; but even here he is, in



his best moments, inferior only to the greatest. For example, here is his sonnet composed upon Westminster Bridge:—

“Earth has not anything to show more fair:  
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by  
A sight so touching in its majesty:  
This city now doth like a garment wear  
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,  
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie  
Open unto the fields, and to the sky:  
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.  
Never did sun more beautifully steep  
In his first splendour valley, rock, or hill;  
Ne’er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!  
The river glideth at his own sweet will.  
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;  
And all that mighty heart is lying still!”

Could this splendid sonnet be surpassed for conciseness, fervour, poetic quality, and the distinguishing grace that stamps it indelibly upon the mind? Pictorially, it satisfies the utmost demands of art. “And all that mighty heart is lying still!” How vividly the idea of a vast city at rest is presented! Let me quote, further, some lines from the Tintern Abbey poem:—

“For I have learned  
To look on Nature, not as in the hour  
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes  
The still, sad music of humanity,  
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power  
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things.”

This is great poetry; and it would be difficult to match it in any poetry except that of Shakespeare or Milton. There are many other lines of equal, of even greater,

excellence scattered throughout the poems. But it is not the object of this article to attempt to make out a case for Wordsworth as a master of his art. His interest to us lies in another direction. He was a teacher. What did he teach; what does he say on the absorbing questions of conduct, of life and death, of the meaning of the universe, and of man's place in it? Does he solve the riddle of the painful earth? If he does not, what has he to say of consolation and hope?

In seeking an answer to these questions, it will be well to bear in remembrance that Wordsworth, the citizen, the politician, the theologian, is sometimes very distinct from Wordsworth the poet. He started life as the enthusiastic admirer of the French in their struggle against despotism and the evils of the ancient *régime*; he ended as the most obstinate of Conservatives. He hailed the advent of liberty in France, but he would not give the Catholics of his own country equal rights with their Protestant fellow-subjects. He rejoiced when a people struck a blow for good government, for a share in the ordering of their destinies; but he upheld the aristocratic caste in England against all other classes. The sympathy for all creeds that he possessed in early years he subsequently exchanged for benedictions on the Church of England, especially when and where its ministers were drawn from "noble families of ancient gentry." One thinks of Browning's "Lost Leader":—

'We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured him,  
Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,  
Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,  
Made him our pattern to live and to die!  
Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,  
Burns, Shelley, were with us—they watch from their graves!  
He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,  
He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves.'

It is not, perhaps, a defence of Wordsworth to say that he was not the first, nor is he likely to be the last, in whom the exuberance and generous discontent of youth with things as he found them, gave place to

the conviction that, on the whole, this is the best of all possible worlds, and that change means retrogression, not progress. But we may plead on his behalf, not unreasonably, that it is scarcely fair to judge him by what we may call his work-a-day opinions, by what he thought on subjects that, important enough without doubt, were transient in their nature. He dwelt ever with matters infinitely more significant to him, more charged with meaning, more fateful to us, though we but dimly comprehend them, than any politics of the hour. It may be interesting to us, in our weaker moments, to learn that the right honourable member for Somewhere is so consistent that he has never been known to change even his tailor; we may, in the same mental state, flush with indignation to hear that the right honourable member for Somewhere-else has an unconquerable aversion to-day from the opinion he expressed yesterday; but the world moves; and these are not the gentry it listens to as it engages in the operation. The written word remains. Does it concern us overmuch how the writer voted or acted in the squabbles, the "great crisis," of his day? His life may have been a hideous mistake, falling far short of nobility; stress of circumstance, or the inexplicable doubleness that makes a man at once good and bad, a god and a devil, may have wrecked him; but in what he has bequeathed to us we can discover the true man—the man as he was in himself. Let him be judged by that.

All that can be laid to the charge of Wordsworth is a change of opinion about questions that, in comparison with his work, were not of the first importance. His life was one of the most beautiful ever led by a man of letters. It was marked by absolute devotion to lofty ideals, untainted by even temporary self-seeking. He was a simple, honest man, who through long years preserved a harmony never distorted by discord in all his dealings with his fellow-creatures. The story of his domestic life is as beautiful as the finest of his poems. We meet here with none of the

dark, sordid features that are the problems of Byron's career, nor need we extenuate anything, as we must with Burns. Milton does not surpass the "plain living and high thinking" of Wordsworth. A life altogether memorable; and especially to be pondered in this age of lower endeavour, of paltry aims, of extravagance, of appalling greed for wealth, and the position that money buys.

Inspiring to us by his example, he makes us yet more his debtor by what he wrote. In the "Prelude" he speaks of

"All books which lay  
Their sure foundation in the heart of man";

and as he speaks of them, it is incumbent upon us to say of the great poems with which he captured the world; they are

"Powers  
For ever to be hallowed, only less  
For what we are and what we may become,  
Than Nature's self, which is the breath of God,  
Or His pure word by miracle revealed."

Wordsworth is the poet of the simple life, which, properly understood, is the only true form of existence; and of Nature, who can teach us to appreciate such a life, and bring us to the happiness which is the result of a perfect union between man and the universe.

"Nature never did betray  
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,  
Through all the years of this our life, to lead  
From joy to joy; for she can so inform  
The mind that is within us, so impress  
With quietness and beauty, and so feed  
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,  
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,  
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all  
The dreary intercourse of daily life,  
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb  
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold  
Is full of blessings."

It would not be true to say that Wordsworth was the



first in our literature to preach this doctrine of the sanctifying influence of Nature, though, of course, he was its mightiest upholder—the first to draw out its full significance, and raise it to the position it now occupies in the minds of most of us. As every one knows, our poetry is full of the joy of Nature, of the delight in Nature. Who can forget Chaucer and the “coming of May”?

“When that the month of May  
Is comen, and that I hear the foules singe,  
And that the flourës ginnen for to spring,  
Farewell my boke and my devocioun.  
Now have I than eke this condition,  
That of all the flourës in the meade  
Than love I most these flourës white and rede,  
Soch that men callen daises in our toun,  
To them I have so great affectioun,  
As I sayd erst, when comen is the May  
That in my bedde there daweth me no day,  
That I n’am up and walking in the mede,  
To seen this flourë ayenst the sunne sprede.”

Following Chaucer, we have Spenser, whose love of Nature is shown by many wonderful lines. Of Shakespeare it would be superfluous to speak. One could quote from him on the subject of Nature to the exclusion of all other writers. What he has written has passed into the language. Milton, though he had not that close love of Nature that Shakespeare had, yet loved her well, and his verse glows with beautiful descriptions. Here are a few lines from *Lycidas* :—

“Throw hither all your quaint enamell’d eyes  
That on the green turf suck the honied showers,  
And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.  
Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,  
The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,  
The white pink, and the pansy freakt with jet,  
The glowing violet,  
The meek rose, and the well-attir’d woodbine  
With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,  
And every flower that sad embroidery wears.”

The unhappy poet Collins comes very near the spirit

of Wordsworth. His "Ode to Evening" is surely one of the finest in our tongue :

"Be mine the hut  
That from the mountain's side  
Views wilds and swelling floods,

. . . . .  
And hamlets brown, and dim-discovered spires;  
And hears their simple bell, and marks o'er all  
Thy dewy fingers draw  
The gradual dusky veil."

Burns is the next great poet to whom Nature was as dear as to Wordsworth; perhaps, in some respect, even dearer. Nature, to Burns, was as a friend to be loved—seldom terrifying or awful, but a tender, joyous, fit companion for the lighter hours. This was the attitude, speaking generally, of all our writers until Wordsworth came. Nature was not so much a thing in itself, as an accessory to our pleasure and enjoyment. Though Shakespeare could find

"Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,  
Sermons in stones,"

he was in this, as in so many other things, practically alone among his countrymen. They regarded Nature as providing the means and opportunities for sport, for a temporary change from the cares of business, the monotony of daily life. The Squire Westerns of the last century looked upon the face of Nature, and saw only that it was or was not fair for hunting. In our own century it is not very different with certain classes. The purling streams are valued for the fish they contain; the lonely moors for the game that lives upon them; the instinct of slaughter sends men far afield to satisfy that wish to kill. Large tracts of land have been depopulated, that deer may thrive for millionaires to shoot at. The sizes of "bags" are boasted about, and the newspapers chronicle full particulars of them. Shall we ever learn

"Never to blend our pleasure or our pride  
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels?"

These characteristics of ours are as prominent to-day as ever they were, especially among our so-called upper and so-called lower classes. And the characteristic of Wordsworth is his protest against them. Nature is something to him more than a hunting ground, an area in which "to spend a happy day" as understood by East-enders when they render Epping Forest hideous on a Bank Holiday. Nature is the great mother, the great consoler, the best friend of mankind. The universe is a temple where all is pure delight.

"Oh then what soul was his, when on the tops  
Of the high mountains, he beheld the sun  
Rise up, and bathe the world in light! He looked,—  
Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth,  
And ocean's liquid mass beneath him lay  
In gladness and deep joy. The clouds were touched,  
And in their silent faces did he read  
Unutterable love. Sound needed none,  
Nor any voice of joy. His spirit drank  
The spectacle; sensation, soul, and form,  
All melted into him; they swallowed up  
His animal being.—

All things there  
Breathed immortality; revolving life  
And greatness still revolving; infinite;  
Their littleness was not; the least of things  
Seemed infinite; and there his spirit shaped  
Her prospects, nor did he believe; he saw."

Nature is not greater than man, but its influence can make him great. Contemplation, "the harvest of a quiet eye," solitude, help him to receive this gracious influence. The best that is in him grows to maturity; the frets and worries of the world lose their benumbing power when he has ascended the "heights which the soul is competent to gain." To be one with Nature is the secret. Wordsworth thought of Nature as a living, breathing thing.

"And 'tis my faith, that every flower  
Enjoys the air it breathes."

"He raises Nature to the level of human thought to give it power and expression," says Walter Pater; "he

subdues man to the level of Nature, and gives him thereby a certain breath and coolness and solemnity."

Man enters into this communion with Nature to the enrichment of his own spirit. The world becomes full of meaning, of wonder, of awe ; there is nothing mean or poor in creation.

"The common growth of Mother Earth  
Suffices me,—her tears, her mirth,  
Her humblest mirth and tears."

The soul, awake to its own majesty, throws off the sordid cares that have weighed it down, is purified, and waits patiently, hopefully, for the life to which this is but the prelude.

"There is  
One great society alone on earth :  
The noble living and the noble dead."

Wordsworth had himself wandered helplessly about, bereft of purpose and of hope. Doubt and the burden of the unintelligible world had oppressed him.

"The fretful stir  
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world  
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart."

But he came forth into the light of things, and let Nature be his teacher. His difficulties disappeared ; his "necessity was turned to glorious gain." His poems are the reiteration, and the insistence upon the mode by which he obtained his freedom. They are almost entirely didactic ; in season, and, indeed sometimes, out of season, he clings to his text:—Follow Nature ; you will learn wisdom, the proper conduct of life ; you will love all things ; you will lose your selfishness, the paltry ambitions that the world admires ; you will know what true wealth is, and count yourself rich through lack of that the world sets most store by. This means a life of solitude, sustained by contemplation. Instead of the crowded streets of cities, you must seek the bare mountains, the lonely



plain, the stream that issues from some hill-side hidden far away. For companions, the simple villager, unsophisticated, ignorant of all beyond the horizon of his native place; the sky, the stars, all growing things and humble animals of the earth, the brown earth itself; the winds; the birds and fishes. Amid such surroundings, with such society, the soul is stripped of the artificial, the trappings of a self-styled civilisation fall down; the soul attunes itself to the eternal, knows that it is part of the eternal. It attains freedom, and draws nearer to the sacred sources of all.

Such, briefly put, are the main points of Wordsworth's creed. It is not necessary to go through all his works for our authority for our outline. We will quote from some of them. Wordsworth repeated himself over and over; the subject may be different, but the idea is the same in the majority of his poems. Here is "Three years she grew in sun and shower," of which the late R. H. Hutton—who has written so well on Wordsworth—said, "If any one doubts the real affinity between the expressions written on the face of Nature and those human expressions which so early interpret themselves to even infants that to account for them except as a natural language seems impossible, the exquisite poem on 'Lucy' ought to convert him. The contrast it illustrates between Wordsworth's faith in real emanations from all living or unliving 'mute insensate' things, and the humanised 'spirits' of life in the Greek mythological poetry, is very striking."

"Three years she grew in sun and shower,  
Then Nature said, 'A lovelier flower  
On earth was never sown;  
This child I to myself will take,  
She shall be mine, and I will make  
A lady of my own.

"Myself will to my darling be  
Both law and impulse; and with me  
The girl, in rock and plain,  
In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,  
Shall feel an overseeing power  
To kindle or restrain.

- "She shall be sportive as the fawn,  
That wild with glee across the lawn,  
Or up the mountain springs;  
And hers shall be the breathing balm,  
And hers the silent and the calm  
Of mute insensate things.
- "The floating clouds their state shall lend  
To her; for her the willow bend;  
Nor shall she fail to see  
Even in the motions of the storm  
Grace that shall mould the maiden's form  
By silent sympathy.
- "The stars of midnight shall be dear  
To her; and she shall lean her ear  
In many a secret place  
Where rivulets dance the wayward round,  
And beauty born of murmuring sound  
Shall pass into her face.
- "And vital feelings of delight  
Shall rear her form to stately height,  
Her virgin bosom swell;  
Such thoughts to Lucy I will give  
While she and I together live  
Here in this happy dell.
- "Thus Nature spake—the work was done.  
How soon my Lucy's race was run!  
She died, and left to me  
This health, this calm, and quiet scene;  
The memory of what has been,  
And never more will be."

In this lovely poem we have Wordsworth's "conception of the plastic influences of Nature in moulding us into beauty." The refining, ennobling influence of Nature is exemplified in the "Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle"; one of Wordsworth's finest productions. The song tells the story of the "good Lord Clifford," who, when a child, had been dispossessed of his ancestral lands, and had grown up as a shepherd. In the hills

- "To his side the fallow-deer  
Came, and rested without fear;  
The eagle, lord of land and sea,  
Stooped down to pay him fealty;

And both the undying fish that swim  
 Through Bowscale-tarn did wait on him;  
 The pair were servants of his eye  
 In their immortality;  
 And glancing, gleaming, dark or bright,  
 Moved to and fro, for his delight.  
 He knew the rocks which angels haunt,  
 Upon the mountains visitant;  
 He hath kenned them taking wing,  
 And into caves where faeries sing  
 He hath entered; and been told  
 By Voices how men lived of old.  
 Among the heavens his eye can see  
 The face of thing that is to be,  
 And if that men report him right,  
 His tongue could whisper words of might."

He is at length restored to his honours and property.  
 At the feast in celebration of this turn in his fortunes,  
 a bard recites his story, and sings that "another day  
 is come," of "fitter hope and nobler doom," the day

"When our shepherd, in his bower  
 Mailed and horsed, with lance and sword,  
 To his ancestors restored  
 Like a re-appearing star,  
 Like a glory from afar,  
 First shall head the flock of war."

But the shepherd had not been with the "great  
 silences" without learning something of their lesson.  
 The call to war is made in vain to him.

" . . . The impassioned minstrel did not know  
 How, by Heaven's grace, this Clifford's heart was framed,  
 How he, long forced in humble walks to go,  
 Was softened into feeling, soothed, and tamed.

"Love had he found in huts where poor men lie;  
 His daily teachers had been woods and rills,  
 The silence that is in the starry sky,  
 The sleep that is among the lowly hills.

"In him, the savage virtue of the race,  
 Revenge, and all ferocious thoughts were dead:  
 Nor did he change; but kept in lofty place  
 The wisdom which adversity had bred.

"Glad were the vales, and every cottage hearth;  
 The shepherd-lord was honoured more and more;

And, ages after he was laid in earth,  
 'The good Lord Clifford,' was the name he bore."

The susceptibility to generous influences lies dormant in each of us. Nature does not instil it, but only through the subtile power of Nature can it arrive at fair fruition. It is blunted and almost stifled in the rush, the competition for the ignoble ends of modern existence. As Wordsworth, in his "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of early Childhood," laments, we may lose, in our passage through life, the light that was born in us. But we cannot altogether sever ourselves from it. The thoughts of childhood are fleeting; but something of them lives. "Nature yet remembers what was so fugitive," and from the glory and purity of past years there springs "perpetual benediction."

"Thanks to the human heart by which we live,  
 Thanks to its tenderness, its joys and fears,  
 To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
 Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

If all we prize be taken from us, there is still the obligation of duty. This "stern daughter of the voice of God" can bring us consolation and peace—

"Stern Lawgiver! Yet thou dost wear  
 The Godhead's most benignant grace;  
 Nor know we anything so fair  
 As is the smile upon thy face;  
 Flowers laugh before thee on their beds,  
 And fragrance in thy footing treads;  
 Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;  
 And the most ancient heavens, through  
 Thee, are fresh and strong."

If we listen to the voices of duty and love—

"Serene will be our days and bright,  
 And happy will our nature be,  
 When love is an unerring light,  
 And joy its own security.  
 And they a blissful course may hold  
 Even now, who, not unwisely bold,  
 Live in the spirit of this creed;  
 Yet seek thy firm support, according to their need."



Whilst the sense of duty sustains us in our pilgrimage, Nature can, if not assuage, at least pacify, the griefs that come of our mortality. Wordsworth speaks of this in some characteristic lines in the "Excursion." They are addressed to one who had suffered a heavy loss by death.

"My friend, enough to sorrow you have given;  
The purposes of wisdom ask no more;  
Be wise and cheerful and no longer read  
The forms of things with an unworthy eye.  
She sleeps in the calm earth, and peace is there.  
I well remember that those very plumes,  
Those weeds, and the high spear-grass on that wall,  
By mist and silent rain-drops silvered o'er,  
As once I passed, did to my heart convey  
So still an image of tranquility,  
So calm and still, and looked so beautiful,  
Amid the uneasy thoughts that filled my mind,  
That what we feel of sorrow and despair,  
From ruin and from change, and all the grief  
The passing shows of being leave behind,  
Appeared an idle dream, that could not live  
Where meditation was."

Nature sympathises with us in our sorrow. It can be with us, too, in our joys: the soul of Nature is happiness—

"The blackbird on the summer trees,  
The lark upon the hill,  
Let loose their carols when they please,  
Are quiet when they will.

"With Nature do they never wage  
A foolish strife; they see  
A happy youth, and their old age  
Is beautiful and free.

"Down to the vale this water steers,  
How merrily it goes!  
'Twill murmur on a thousand years,  
And flow as now it flows."

Contact with Nature, some insight into its secret, an answering to its spirit, draws us closer to our fellow creatures. Wordsworth had "a reverence for human beings as such which enabled him to face even their

frailties without alienation." Only love and tenderness avail if we would touch human hearts. Wordsworth's whole life and teaching were in illustration of this truth. Naturally he turned to the poor and lowly, the ignorant, the despised. We need only quote a few of his poems to show this. Let us remark in passing that his pictures of the poorer classes are unsurpassed in fidelity and completeness. Stern, rugged, realistic, they are compact of the truth of the seeing eye, the keen, kindly intelligence, the warm heart of a man who understood and loved. They have a potent influence on our literature to-day. "A sort of Biblical depth and solemnity hangs over this strange, new, passionate world of which Wordsworth first raised the image," Walter Pater wrote; "and the reflection of which some of our best modern fiction has caught from him." The men and women Wordsworth has delineated stand under "the broad open eye of the solitary sky" brooding over their hills and dales, sharply and vividly outlined against the mountains, they stir the depths of imagination and feeling. Poverty was their intimate; they knew well the grimmer companion, Want; homeless were many of them, with the trees, or some overhanging hedge, for their frequent shelter; slowly, miserably, with occasional gleams of mirth or gladness that made their sadness the more ghastly, they trudged through existence; without fear, but not without hope, they laid down their unregarded lives. The pathos, the pain, the silent and unanswered questionings, the tragedy, of these our fellow-creatures! Yet not wholly in vain did they live; the world does not heed them, but the poet's immortalising hand limns them for us; they and what they can teach us, remain for ever. Wordsworth's power in presenting us with such types has never been recognised to its full extent. There is, for instance, the Old Cumberland Beggar. When we have read of him, surely he remains in the memory as indelibly as a creation by Dickens or Scott! An old man, who begs from door to door—

"He travels on, a solitary man;  
 His age has no companion. On the ground  
 His eyes are turned, and, as he moves along,  
 They move along the ground; and evermore  
 . . . . . One little span of earth  
 Is all his prospect.  
 . . . . . Poor traveller!  
 His staff trails with him; scarcely do his feet  
 Disturb the summer dust; he is so still  
 In look and motion, that the village curs,  
 Ere he has passed the door, will turn away,  
 Weary of barking at him.

But we are not to deem him a "burthen of the earth." It is Nature's law that none, the meanest of created things, even the vilest and brutish, should exist divorced from good—

"Then be assured  
 That least of all can aught that ever owned  
 The heaven-regarding eye and front sublime  
 Which man is born to, sink, how'er depressed,  
 So low as to be scorned without a sin;  
 Without offence to God cast out of view.  
 . . . . . While from door to door  
 This old man creeps, the villagers in him  
 Behold a record which together binds  
 Past deeds and offices of charity,  
 Else unremembered, and so keeps alive  
 The kindly moods in hearts which lapse of years,  
 And that half-wisdom half-experience gives,  
 Make slow to feel, and by sure steps resign  
 To selfishness and cold oblivious cares.

. . . . .  
 Where'er the aged Beggar takes his rounds,  
 The mild necessity of use compels  
 To acts of love; and habit does the work  
 Of reason; yet prepares that after-joy  
 Which reason cherishes. And thus the soul,  
 By that sweet taste of pleasure unpursued,  
 Doth find herself insensibly disposed  
 To virtue and true goodness."

And while he stirs the fountains of emotion and sympathy in the breasts of these villagers, he may exert a wider influence.

“Some there are  
 By their good works exalted, lofty minds  
 And meditative, authors of delight  
 And happiness, which to the end of time  
 Will live, and spread, and kindle; even such minds  
 In childhood, from this solitary being,  
 Or from like wanderer, haply have received . . .  
 That first mild touch of sympathy and thought,  
 In which they found their kindred with a world  
 Where want and sorrow were.”

Thus, the “poorest poor” can bear about a “good which the benignant law of Heaven has hung around” them. They bear their ills with fortitude, even with cheerfulness. Fortune disdains them; but they “live in the eye of Nature,” and Nature compensates them with something of its own calm. This we find with the Leech-gatherer. The poet, depressed and sad, walks in a lonely place, and meets beside a pool an ancient man, feeble, grey, with every mark of poverty about him. He is stirring the water for the leeches.

“He told, that to these waters he had come  
 To gather leeches, being old and poor:  
 Employment hazardous and wearisome!  
 And he had many hardships to endure:  
 From pond to pond he roamed, from moor to moor;  
 Housing, with God’s good help, by choice or chance,  
 And in this way he gained an honest maintenance.”

Destitution could go no further than this; no lot could be more forlorn; but the old man utters no complaint. He answers the poet gently, smilingly; there is peace in his heart; rich in this, the buffets of the world cannot disturb his evenness of mind. The poet is amazed. He had striven with his untoward thoughts, vainly; fears and fancies flocked thick upon him:

“We poets in our youth begin in gladness;  
 But thereof come in the end despondency and madness.”

The leech-gatherer was as a rebuke to him.

“A man from some far region sent,  
 To give me human strength, by apt admonishment.”



They talk together, the leech-gatherer cheerful, kind ;

“ . . . And when he ended,  
I could have laughed myself to scorn to find  
In that decrepit man so firm a mind.  
'God,' said I, 'be my help and stay secure ;  
I'll think of the leech-gatherer on the lonely moor ! ”

Perhaps it is not necessary to linger any longer over this aspect of Wordsworth's work. Let us see what he has to say when he leaves it, and speaks on matters upon which he has written some of the noblest words in our own or any literature: on patriotism, the national conscience, human rights; the governance of the world. Here he used the sonnet almost exclusively, and with a power and majesty unequalled since Shakespeare. No poet of our tongue has written more weightily, with greater insight and enthusiasm for all that makes a nation really great, than Wordsworth, on these subjects. He reminds one of the prophets of old time, who, speaking with the inspiration of a message of vast import to men, utter mighty things in tones unknown and unattainable by those who perforce must listen. The passion for liberty throbs in every one of these poems; liberty, sober, ordered, sedate. Liberty is the first right; from it spring the virtues that make strong and sweet the civic life. But whilst liberty is the soul of the body politic, yet it is as the soul of the individual; it must expand; it must have high aspirations; its promptings must be noble; or it perishes. Not commercial success, not the accumulation of wealth, not the growth in material power, mark a nation as great. It is great in proportion as it shows attributes and tendencies of justice and mercy, liberty, elevation of aim, and honest dealing. What the finest of our race have been as individuals, so should a people be in its national, collective characteristics.

In its early phases, Wordsworth welcomed the French Revolution. He gives his reason in the "Prelude," wherein he says that even in crudest youth he found nothing in the regal sceptre, the pomp of

orders and degrees, that dazzled him, but rather what he mourned and ill could brook. He beheld that the best did not rule, and felt they ought to rule. From the first he had been subservient to the presence of God's mysterious power made manifest in Nature's sovereignty, and to these only. Associated with them were fellowship with books, and mountain liberty. As a consequence, he hailed the government of equal rights and individual worth. He relates what he saw in his travels through France, and how his heart went out to the people :—

“ . . . I with him believed,  
That a benignant spirit was abroad  
Which might not be withstood, that poverty  
Abject as this would in a little time  
Be found no more, that we should see the earth  
Unthwarted in her wish to recompense  
The meek, the lowly, patient child of toil,  
All institutes for ever blotted out  
That legalised exclusion, empty pomp  
Abolished, sensual state and cruel power  
Whether by edict of the one or few,  
And finally, as sum and crown of all,  
Should see the people having a strong hand  
In framing their own laws; whence better days  
To all mankind.”

Pity and shame were his when England joined with the European powers in attacking the Republic; he rejoiced, “exulted in the triumph of my soul,” when his countrymen were overthrown. They fought against the eternal principles of humanity, right, justice. Later on, Wordsworth was on the side of his native land, but this was when the hopes aroused by the Revolution were crushed, and Napoleon was dictator. Then England, and not France, was the upholder of the principles that animated the poet. He came to look upon England as the champion of the world, as standing alone for liberty. That such a man as Napoleon should be the chosen of France was a bitter reflection.

“ . . . The tenderest mood  
Of that man's mind—What can it be? What food  
Fed his first hopes? What knowledge could he gain?”

The nations must not look for true rulers amongst men of the battle field if they would keep their liberties—

“Tis not in battles that from youth we train  
The Governor who must be wise and good,  
And temper with the sternness of the brain  
Thoughts motherly, and meek as womanhood.  
Wisdom doth live with children round her knees;  
Books, leisure, perfect freedom, and the talk  
Man holds with week-day man in the hourly walk  
Of the mind's business; these are the degrees  
By which true sway doth mount; this is the stalk  
True power doth grow on; and her rights are these.”

“By the soul only nations shall be great and free.” Miserable is the condition when life is only “drest for show,” when the “wealthiest man among us is the best”; when we adore rapine, avarice, expense, “when ennobling thoughts depart.” “Riches are akin to fear, to change, to cowardice, and death,” We must turn from our emasculating food; the world in selfish interest perverts the will. The great men who have been among us knew how genuine glory was put on; they taught us how rightfully a nation shone in splendour. We must be like Milton, whose soul was like a star, yet whose “heart the lowliest duties on herself did lay.” Plain living and high thinking are essential if we would live as men and with freedom, and communion with Nature helps us to their attainment.

So we conclude our brief and imperfect sketch of this great poet. He teaches many things; he teaches, above all, the simple life, the sanctity of the soul, the grandeur of man. Beside these, nothing is of value, nothing avails. His teachings are stern; they will always be unpalatable to the world. But they are true. If we strip ourselves of the wrappings that time, tradition, love of wealth and position, prejudice,

social environment, the fashion or the folly of our pride has burthened us with, and are honest with ourselves, we must admit this. Happy shall we be, happy indeed the nation, that strives for the realisation of the seer's thought. To-day, much as there is to cause despair, there is much more to inspire hope.

"Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows,  
Like harmony in music."

TUDOR PRITCHARD.



## Shelley

### I

THE prophet is a moral pioneer. And moral pioneering is a necessity of human progress—how great a necessity we do not always realize. For life is always an exploration, an advance into unknown territory. After each fresh advance, indeed, man settles down for a time to the enjoyment of his new possession, and tries to persuade himself that he has at last found a permanent home. From his new position as a centre he pushes out a circumference of moral order just far enough to meet his practical needs. He grows to be so much at home in this customary order that he is apt to lose all memory of the way he has come; and when the inevitable instinct of movement seizes him once again, he finds he has lost his reckoning, and does not know how he ought to advance. It is then that the prophet is needed—the man with an instinct for the track of true and fruitful progress.

But the world is wise, or at least prudent. It does not follow the pioneer at once. It waits till he has justified himself, till he has himself tested and proved his faith in his own instincts. Solitariness is one of the marks of the true prophet. His contemporaries will not or cannot understand him. They often distort, they always resent, his message. It is another generation that gets hold of his meaning. And so he needs all the more to be sure of himself, to be able to stand alone against the world. Hence that sternness and that authority which are also marks of the prophet. He sees so clearly what his age needs that he cannot

be overawed into silence or even compromise by its blind assurance that it needs nothing.

It may seem a little rash to place Shelley among the prophets. We all remember only too well that Matthew Arnold described him as an "ineffectual angel." Now a prophet is never an angel, and sooner or later he becomes supremely effectual. So far, therefore, as Arnold's judgment is accurate, Shelley loses his right to a place among the prophets. But I would venture to impugn that judgment as at least deficient. There was a great deal of stern humanity in Shelley to which the epithet "angelic" seems hardly appropriate. At an age when most young men, whatever their gifts, are content to take life as it comes, he had already marked out for himself a clear and definite aim to which he devoted himself with a self-sacrifice which was apparently natural and spontaneous. He put his hand to the plough early, and he kept it there through life. His short life was a strenuous maturing of his early purpose. He was a reformer by instinct and a reformer by stern and deliberate purpose. And far from being ineffectual, his zeal has had its fulness of reward. He has been the inspiration, lovingly and reverently acknowledged, of some of the greatest English poets since his time. He has deepened and purified the natural fervours of youth, so often left to run riot and prey upon themselves, for at least two generations of young English manhood. In short, all that was positive and vital in those beliefs which he himself held so strenuously has become, and largely owing to him, a part of our unconscious mental heritage. Shelley was at least a minor prophet.

## II

The spiritual gains of the nineteenth century have been so great and so varied; they have had their origin in fields of speculation so remote from one another; they seem at first sight so complex and irreducible, that it requires an effort to remember that

there is a single explanation of them all. We forget that at the end of last century a great Revolution—political, social, mental, moral—disturbed the ancient centre of order, and that we have been spending this century in settling down around a new centre. We affect nowadays to ignore the Revolution as a brutal and entirely fruitless outburst of fury. We point to the survival, nay, to the increased vigour, of the objects of its rage. The Church is stronger than ever. Clericalism is once more a force to be reckoned with in every country in Europe. Government, we say, tends once more to Caesarism. New republic is only old kingdom writ differently. But we are entirely wrong. The Revolution may have been brutal, but it most certainly has not been fruitless. It has on the contrary altered the centre in every department of man's activity. For the Revolution was only accidentally political. It was really spiritual. It marked the opening of a new spiritual era. It disturbed the human centre. And so this century has been a century of accommodation. All the old institutions, the necessary institutions of man's social life, the Church, the State, and all their dependencies, have been accommodating themselves to the new circumstances, have been re-arranging themselves about the new centre. If they are stronger, as indeed they are immeasurably stronger, it is only because they have adapted themselves to the conditions enforced by the Revolutionary ideas.

Now Shelley was the great English exponent of those ideas. He recovered them from the very trough of reaction. At the moment when even the most enfranchised spirits had sunk into apathy and despair, he seemed to be possessed by them, he boldly proclaimed their universal efficacy. Naturally enough, no one listened to him then. But ten years after his death he was drawing like a magnet the best of the youth of a new generation, some of whom were to be the great teachers of the mid-century. And was he not, too, one of the chief influences which went to the

making of Browning, to whom more than to any other this age owes its deepest spiritual impulse?

What then are those ideas which we have been unconsciously assimilating during a whole century, and round which we have re-arranged a shattered order? They may all be traced back to one original—the importance of man. The old social order, however excellent, however benevolent, was imposed upon men from without. They might accept, or they might resist it, but at least they could not regulate it. The individual opinion, the individual feeling, was of no importance. Men accepted the order under which they lived—whether religious, political, or social—because they believed it to be founded by an immediate Divine decree. There was no questioning an order of such origin. It seemed almost a blasphemy to defend it by argument, to suppose it questionable. In fact the existing order was an ultimate law of Nature. Now the sixteenth century is remarkable because it began to question this order, to deny that it was an ultimate law. The intellect of man had asserted its right to prove, to test, to judge. The intellectual revolt had begun; and it continued through most of three centuries. It remained severely intellectual, a mere solvent of faith, gradually loosening men's hold upon their old belief that the traditional order was divinely appointed. These three hundred years were, as Comte has well called them, "a long insurrection of the intelligence against the heart." The philosophers indeed were themselves utilitarian supporters of the existing order which they were teaching others to despise. But the populace has always the logic of the heart. It does not care for useful compromises. If it has ceased to reverence an institution, it instinctively seeks one which it can reverence. The Revolution was the logical result of three centuries of intellectual revolt. It was the clear perception by the multitude of ordinary intelligences, that if the old order had no sanction in an indisputable authority, then it must make way for one which



would correspond to man's own feeling of his needs. The Revolution focussed the new faith of man in himself, which had imperceptibly grown up during all these years of arduous questioning.

But every faith has its ordeal of fire when it first meets the inevitable test of application. And the excesses of the political Revolution in France were enough to try the sturdiest faith in those ideas out of which it had grown. It is no wonder that a time of reaction set in, during which it was hard for the most generous spirits to keep alive some remnants of the old impassioned faith. What was needed was someone who could rescue it from the wreckage of its first collapse, and recommend it once again, in clear and convincing simplicity, to a hesitant world. This is just what Shelley did. He believed, and the simple intensity of his belief became an inspiration to the generation that succeeded him.

### III

To the popular imagination Shelley is even still a kind of evil spirit of mockery and denial. Nothing can be farther from the truth. He was the most earnest and serious, as he was the most positive of men. His denials, when he has to deny in the interests of the faith he holds so positively, are indeed almost terribly uncompromising. But they are so only because his faith is so strong. And the very essence of Shelley's faith is his passionate conviction of man's right to freedom. This was behind all he wrote or thought, whether in the way of assertion or denial. His violent and ill-proportioned indictments of kingcraft and priestcraft, which nowadays give a tone of almost absurd unreality to much of the *Revolt of Islam*, were just as much a necessary expression of his generous creed as the sublimest conceptions of an ideal humanity in the *Prometheus Unbound*. For him all the ills of humanity were directly traceable to slavery, to the interference with man's natural right to develop and express what was in him. And



reform in human affairs must come naturally from the enlargement of this right. Shelley did not indeed forget that we might enslave ourselves—that the worst form of slavery is slavery to blind, unregulated impulse. His earliest ambition and his enduring ambition as a reformer was, to use his own phrase, to make men “good, disinterested and free.” The war of freedom must be waged with the weapons of an almost unearthly virtue. When the soldiers of freedom in the *Revolt of Islam* have been surprised and butchered by their slavish foes, Laon stays the avenging swords of the comrades of the dead. Freedom cannot be established by the methods of slavery, by cruel and avenging force.

“Oh wherefore should ill ever flow from ill,  
 And pain still keener pain for ever breed?  
 We all are brethren—even the slaves who kill  
 For hire are men: and to avenge misdeed  
 On the misdoer doth but Misery feed  
 With her own broken heart! . . . .  
 Join then your hands and hearts, and let the past  
 Be as a grave, which gives not up its dead,  
 To evil thoughts.”

Laon would never have perorated so sublimely in actual life. Its demands would have been sterner. But then the world which Shelley is describing is a world of ideal conditions. He is laying down the eternal conditions of true freedom, and he cannot understate them, because they are so familiar and real in the world of his imagination. Here is how he states his own intention in the preface to this poem. “In recommending a great and important change in the spirit which animates the social institutions of mankind, I have avoided all flattery to those violent and malignant passions which are ever on the watch to mingle with and alloy the most beneficial innovations. There is no quarter given to revenge, or envy, or prejudice. Love is celebrated everywhere as the sole law which should govern the moral world.” This

anxiety of Shelley's that the pursuit of freedom should never be stained by the touch of cruelty or revenge was a natural outcome of the high moral value which he assigned to it. Freedom was for him the basis of all morality. It was its absence which explained all the actual miseries of the world. But it was no mere external freedom which he demanded for the healing of wrong. No one has ever seen more clearly than Shelley that external freedom demands as its complement an internal harmony, and exists only to nurture and sustain that. In other words, the man who is free within, who is master of himself, needs the outer state of freedom, and is maimed and wounded and disabled by its absence. And the man who is not yet master of himself may best be made so by being thrown back on himself, by gradually proving his own freedom, by learning in the school of experience his capacities and limitations. It is for want of that trial that men find themselves unable to use the conditions of external freedom when they are suddenly placed in their midst. It is thus that Shelley accounts for and excuses the excesses of the Revolution. "The revulsion occasioned by the atrocities of the demagogues, and the re-establishment of successive tyrannies in France, was terrible, and felt in the remotest corner of the civilized world. Could *they* listen to the plea of reason who had groaned under the calamities of a social state, according to the provisions of which one man riots in luxury whilst another famishes for want of bread? Can he who the day before was a trampled slave suddenly become liberal-minded, forbearing, and independent? This is the consequence of the habits of a state of society to be produced by resolute perseverance and indefatigable hope, and long-suffering and long-believing courage, and the systematic efforts of generations of men of intellect and virtue."

This conception of freedom as the very condition of all morality has won its way to undisputed acceptance among us. We no longer merely tolerate free

thought. We look upon it as a great moral force. In every field of speculation we look with hope and eagerness for what the trained and serious mind can add to our present stores of knowledge. And again in the moral sphere we no longer rate very high the mere slavish obedience, however exact, to a moral code, however excellent. We cannot be satisfied with less than the awakening of the heart, the importment of something positive and individual into all moral decisions, the spiritual appropriation of that which we obey. Lastly, in matters of government, even the most reactionary of the Western polities boldly base themselves upon free popular choice. There may be a latent distrust of democracy in the air, but it is its own distrust of itself, it is its healthy and inevitable discovery of its own weaknesses. Let us only hope and strive to secure that the self-distrust of democracy may grow more and more definite, as that is the best security of the deepening and purifying of its powers. Of all this great development of liberty of spirit Shelley was the prophet. He was the teacher of the most universal and the most necessary of truths when he proclaimed to a stunned and hesitant age that liberty—for man, for states, for thought—was the greatest of moral forces. And Shelley recognised very justly that literature had always been the great fortress of liberty, that in literature alone no class had ever succeeded in erecting itself into an exclusive hierarchy of authority, stifling life and progress. True literature is always the expression of a free spirit, what Shelley calls the “uncommunicated lightning” of an individual mind.

#### IV

How is it then that liberty often works so disastrously, that it is so often abused? How is it that man sometimes flies of his own accord from the results of a freedom degenerating into licence to the strictest of despotisms? How is it that this greatest of moral forces is responsible for the worst and the most hope-

less of moral disasters? How is it that men have never allowed themselves, can never allow themselves apparently, that measure of liberty which Nature allows them? It is because the perfect law of liberty always presupposes love, can never indeed have its perfect work without love. If the external bond which holds men together is withdrawn, an internal bond which will draw them together must take its place. And it is just because the external bond of mere authority has been so relaxed that this age has had to set itself to foster and deepen the other. We are forced by the very necessities of the case to try to understand one another, to persuade one another, to adopt different points of view, to tolerate one another. This perhaps is not the great moral force which we call love, but at least it is a training for it and in it. We may begin by tolerating other opinions than our own out of contempt or of pure necessity; but we soon grow to be just to them, to understand why they are held. We enter into another person's experience, we understand his outlook as we never could have done before. Tolerance has led to understanding. Or again, think of how much knowledge of one another we have gained by having to use persuasion where once we might have used force, by having to make an appeal for acceptance where once we might have commanded obedience. Notwithstanding much that is said about the growing separateness and mutual misunderstanding of classes, the foundations of real appreciation of class by class are being laid in what seems for the moment their accentuated divisions. So long as one class patronises another—*i.e.* takes it for granted in its treatment of another that its own ideals are the only right ones, and the ones to which every other class must conform to find salvation—the highest kind of knowledge and respect is impossible. Independence is of the very essence of such intercourse as can lead to understanding and affection. And again, men are beginning to value what truth they can discover, no matter whence it comes,



because it is no longer arbitrarily forced upon them, because it has to make its appeal to their experience and their intelligence. In all these ways the forces which draw men to one another are widening and intensifying their operation at the same time that the bonds which once held them together by force are being relaxed.

Now it is one of Shelley's great merits that he saw and proclaimed the conditions of the new order—this among others, that men can no longer be held together from without, but must be drawn together from within. To Shelley the ideal nation—a nation indeed that has never been, that has always been betrayed to destruction even in its birth-throes—yet the nation that must gradually grow into being to satisfy man's highest need, is the nation dedicated to truth, liberty, and love:—

"To Truth its state is dedicate,  
And Freedom leads it forth, her mate:—  
A legioned band of linked brothers,  
Whom Love calls children."

And here is the picture of the results of the reign of mere authority—the results alike for tyrant and for slave, the perversion it has wrought of moral force:—

"In each human heart terror survives  
The ravin it has gorged. The loftiest fear  
All that they would disdain to think were true;  
Hypocrisy and custom make their minds  
The fanes of many a worship now outworn.  
They dare not devise good for man's estate,  
And yet they know not that they do not dare.  
The good want power but to weep barren tears:  
The powerful goodness want,—worse need for them,  
The wise want love: and those who love want wisdom:  
And all best things are thus confused to ill.  
Many are strong and rich, and would be just,  
But live among their suffering fellow-men  
As if none felt: they know not what they do."

There is all the helplessness, the heartlessness, the misunderstanding, the blindness of a world of mere



authority, a world without love, graven indelibly by the pen of a seer on the conscience of this age. Here again is a description of life in that golden age to the hope of which Shelley wrought so strenuously to keep man's heart alive. It is the vision of one of those "fair spirits whose homes are the dim caves of human thought," and who "behold beyond that twilight realm, as in a glass, the future":—

"Men walked

One with the other even as spirits do.  
 None fawned, none trampled; hate, disdain, or fear,  
 Self-love or self-contempt on human brows  
 No more inscribed. . . .  
 None frowned, none trembled, none with eager fear  
 Gazed on another's eye of cold command,  
 Until the subject of a tyrant's will  
 Became (worse fate) the abject of his own,  
 Which spurred him, like an outspent horse, to death.  
 None wrought his lips in truth-entangling lines  
 Which smiled the lie his tongue disdained to speak.  
 None, with firm sneer, trod out in his own heart  
 The sparks of love and hope; till there remained  
 Those bitter ashes, a soul self-consumed,  
 And the wretch crept a vampire among men,  
 Infecting all with his own hideous ill.  
 None talked that common, false, cold, hollow talk  
 Which makes the heart deny the yes it breathes,  
 Yet question that unmeant hypocrisy  
 With such a self-mistrust as has no name."

This is indeed a vision of light through darkness: but were it not for the flame of ardent faith in love as the great human healer and reconciler which burns in Shelley's soul, we should not see so clearly how bright life might be and how dark it is, nor again how alone its darkness may become light. In passages such as these I have quoted, we are made to feel how keen and subtle was Shelley's psychology. There can be no greater mistake than to imagine, as many still seem inclined to do, that Shelley was a mere visionary idealist, a kind of easy perfectionist who had never counted the cost of soul through which alone any gain of virtue can be won. He knew every form of weakness as only one can do who has battled with weakness

in the struggle for self-mastery. His analysis of moral disease is deeper and truer than could have been gained by the aid of a psychological microscope. It is obviously something of the experience of a heart that had always striven to be true to what it knew of goodness. It is this that gives reality to Shelley's rapt idealism. He cannot compromise his vision, but at least he knows its remoteness and the conditions under which alone it can be obtained and must always be pursued. To sum up this discussion of Shelley's teachings about liberty and love, and self-mastery as the condition of either, let me quote the powerful sonnet entitled *Political Greatness* :—

“Nor happiness, nor majesty, nor fame,  
 Nor peace, nor strength, nor skill in arms or arts,  
 Shepherd those herds whom tyranny makes tame;  
 Verse echoes not one beating of their hearts,  
 History is but the shadow of their shame,  
 Art veils her glass, or from the pageant starts  
 As to oblivion their blind millions fleet,  
 Staining that heaven with obscene imagery  
 Of their own likeness. What are numbers knit  
 By force or custom? Man who man would be,  
 Must rule the empire of himself; in it  
 Must be supreme, establishing his throne  
 On vanquished will, quelling the anarchy  
 Of hopes and fears, being himself alone.”

## V

But Shelley's belief in liberty, and truth, and love was not the outcome of a mere blind desire. It was no isolated aspiration, indulged in to save him from the pressure of a practical despair. Liberty and love were for him of the eternal essence of things. They were the key to the constitution of nature. They were not merely results hardly won by the moral sweat and toil of created life. They were the eternal qualities of the Power which lies behind and within all life. This creed of ideal optimism held Shelley's heart and mind with so tyrannous a grasp as to make him altogether unfair to history. Of history as a study

he was frankly and almost fiercely contemptuous. History was simply the elaborated denial of nature. Indeed, life itself was hardly real. It was at most the night side of nature. The true reality lay behind life and found the dimmest of expressions through it. Shelley had no conception of the great patient life of humanity as being the unconscious or at most dimly-conscious instrument of the Will behind it. He thought only of enlightened individuals—the morally enlightened, the intellectually enlightened—penetrating to the vision of the reality behind. The Power that guides the world lay behind life in its veiled beauty, and the vision of it was only to be won by those who were true to its own character, to truth and liberty and love. Shelley's Pantheism was Spinozist. He had no notion of the Hegelian category of ideal unity. To him it would have been impossible to conceive of the Divine as a re-creative harmony amid life's actual discords. To him these discords were absolute. They could not be wedded; much less, if they were forced into a union, could any new life spring from it. Good was eternally good, and evil, if not eternally, at least wholly evil. But still Shelley had no manner of doubt that good was natural, and evil unnatural. There is an interesting passage in the *Epipsychidion* which reveals his mental attitude towards these conflicting opposites, and the grounds of his conviction that one was the assertion of the natural and the other its contradiction:—

“Mind from its object differs most in this:  
Evil from good; misery from happiness;  
The baser from the nobler; the impure  
And frail from what is clear and must endure.  
If you divide suffering or dross, you may  
Diminish till it is consumed away;  
If you divide pleasure, and love, and thought,  
Each part exceeds the whole; and we know not  
How much, while any yet remains unshared,  
Of pleasure may be gained, of sorrow spared.  
This truth is that deep well whence sages draw  
The unenvied light of hope; the eternal law

By which those live to whom the world of life  
Is as a garden ravaged, and whose strife  
Tills for the promise of a later birth  
The wilderness of this elysian earth."

Tilling the wilderness for the promise of a later birth—that is at least a noble conception of life's duty, and it seems a just one. And it is possible just because the deepest human experience proves that good is eternal and evil transitory, that the one grows and the other wanes by division.

This belief of Shelley's in the eternal and essential goodness of that Power which is revealed in life was deeply religious. He was too much of a poet to be able to isolate man, to treat man as an ethical being standing at bay against the brute power of nature. It was just man that needed explanation. Why was he so good and so evil? Why did he here and there strive so nobly after the true and the worthy, though always so ready to decline upon the ignoble and the base? And Shelley's answer was the religious answer, that man is good because he is drawn by an eternal goodness, which is the very basis of life, and to which he sometimes opens his eyes and his heart, and that he is evil because his eyes are so seldom open to this natural goodness by which he is enfolded, and because his heart is so often shut against it. Shelley indeed held that this blindness was involuntary, that men's eyes were shut by an infamous mask of circumstance, and that if only this mask were removed they would wish to see. That, too, was surely a generous faith, and even a necessary one for the believer in natural goodness. One thing only Shelley did not realize—how often men make their own masks and with what determination they cling to them and how difficult therefore it sometimes is to remove them.

But for the man of open eyes and open heart Shelley held that the world was a revelation—alike the world within and the world without. He does not indeed often like Wordsworth treat external nature as a solemn and venerable teacher. His enjoyment of her



transitory moods is far too keen and natural. But behind all his treatment there lies the sense of her deep significance, how deeply she can inspire and how much reveal. Those great necessities of man's life that are ever on his lips—truth, liberty, and love—are "Nature's sacred watchwords." There is far more than poetic truth in the *Hymn of Apollo*. For Shelley it is vital truth:

"The sunbeams are my shafts, with which I kill  
Deceit, that loves the night and fears the day;  
All men who do or even imagine ill  
Fly me, and from the glory of my ray  
Good minds and open actions take new might,  
Until diminished by the reign of night."

And what a passionate sincerity there is in this ascription of self-consciousness to nature and of her essential unity wherever she may manifest herself, with which the same poem ends:

"I am the eye with which the universe  
Beholds itself and knows itself divine;  
All harmony of instrument or verse,  
All prophecy, all medicine, are mine,  
All light of art or nature;—to my song  
Victory and praise in its own right belong."

We feel instinctively that this is no formal complimentary inspiration from the remembrance of a dead god, but a perfectly sincere and convinced inspiration from the vision of a living one.

Sometimes, too, he touches the Wordsworthian note itself. Rarely has he done so with so much directness as in the *Lines on Mont Blanc*. Here is an example,—

"The wilderness has a mysterious tongue  
Which teaches awful doubt,—or faith so mild,  
So solemn, so serene, that man may be,  
But for such faith, with nature reconciled.  
Thou hast a voice, great mountain, to repeal  
Large codes of fraud and woe; not understood  
By all, but which the wise and great and good  
Interpret, or make felt, or deeply feel."

And here, in the concluding lines of the same poem,



is the secret of the sympathy of man and nature, of their mutual knowledge, their interpretation each of the other.—

“The secret strength of Things,  
Which governs thought, and to the infinite dome  
Of heaven is as a law, inhabits thee.  
And what were thou and earth and stars and sea,  
If to the human mind’s imaginings  
Silence and solitude were vacancy?”

This, then, is the secret of Shelley’s optimism. It is that the “secret strength of Things” is good. At the heart of all life, and ever sensible to the open heart of man, is that Power—

“Which wields the world with never-weary love,  
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.”

Nothing but this vision could justify such optimism. For life itself, the actual human world, seems a negation of all this. The brightness is all round it, but it, alas! is itself so dark. Man is after all only—

“A traveller from the cradle to the grave  
Through the dim night of this immortal day.”

“Dim night” indeed it is with all its wrong and its ignorance and its heartlessness, with all its denial of truth and liberty and love; and yet sometimes “the deep shade is cleft” and we know—

“That virtue, though obscured on earth, not less  
Survives all mortal change in lasting loveliness.”

Sometimes we open our eyes, and there is around us the “immortal day.”

If this healing faith in nature and in life has become almost a part of our intellectual and emotional being, we owe it largely to Shelley and Wordsworth. And we ought not to forget at what a cost Shelley at least won it for us. He did not gain it lightly, and he did not hold it lightly. There was a deep note of sadness in his life, which is reflected everywhere in his poetry. There rings so often through it a pathetic cry of protest. There is such a bitterness in that

phrase which he so often uses—"The painted veil which those who live call life." There is a terrible sincerity about this masterpiece of self-portrayal.

"He sought,  
For his lost heart was tender, things to love,  
But found them not, alas! Nor was there aught  
The world contains the which he could approve.  
Through the unheeding many he did move,  
A splendour among shadows, a bright blot  
Upon this gloomy scene, a spirit that strove  
For truth, and, like the Preacher, found it not."

And there is the note of an intimate sorrow in the opening of the beautiful "Lines written among the Euganean Hills."

"Many a green isle needs must be  
In the deep wide sea of misery;  
Or the mariner, worn and wan,  
Never thus could voyage on—  
Day and night, and night and day,  
Drifting on his dreary way,  
With the solid darkness black  
Closing round his vessel's track."

Shelley was certainly a prey to his emotions. But the note of expostulation in his poetry is too frequent and too pathetic, its note of protest is too sincere, to let us rest in such easy explanations. The pressure of life's wrong was for Shelley a constraint of the heart which made it hard for him to hold that faith which nevertheless he did hold so heroically and handed on to us in verse that still inspires the faithless and sustains the faithful.

## VI

The influence which Shelley has exerted on the actual thought and feeling of this century is not exactly calculable. It is always so much easier to measure the merely external results of theoretic change than the inner spiritual force which produced the change. And it was just this spiritual force, this power of inspiration, which Shelley supplied in every

field of reform. His political theory, for instance, was entirely at variance with that which prevails among us to-day, and yet no one has done more than he to give to political action that quality of high and noble seriousness which redeems its coarser and meaner aspects. Nor was his influence in the field of politics accidental. It was entirely deliberate. For long he took himself much more seriously as a political reformer than as a poet. His supreme conscious interest, indeed, throughout most of his life was politics in the larger sense—*i.e.* the methods and ideals of the organised corporate life of men in a state. This interest coloured, indeed dominated, much of his poetry. And from his imagination it received a new tone of sincerity and reality, which at the beginning of this century it sadly lacked. He had nothing but contempt for the pettiness of the actual English politics of this century's teens. He flung its dross into the crucible of his passionate indignation, meaning to consume it utterly, and there emerged the pure gold of a noble and universal political principle. So far, indeed, as Shelley had a distinct political theory, it was borrowed wholesale. Godwin's *Political Justice* was his political Bible, and its verbal inspiration was with him almost a dogma. The creed which he had drawn from that book he never sought to change by addition or subtraction, but none the less his imagination inevitably transformed it.

If we wish to estimate Shelley's influence upon political ideals, we must understand his own starting-point in the principles of *Political Justice*. Godwin's theories are all rooted in a single assumption, *viz.*, that men are in the main swayed by considerations of reason. Only point out clearly to them the reasonableness of any course of conduct, and they will adopt it. Now it is clear that when men live together in a society, and are closely associated in all the relations of life, the only rule of conduct which can be justified by reason is one which will tend to the general good. The nature of the general good, there-

fore, is the one object of research worthy of the good citizen. Nor can there be any doubt for the man who uses his reason as to what that object is. "To a rational being," says Godwin, "there can be but one rule of conduct—justice; and one mode of ascertaining that rule—the exercise of the understanding." It was a natural result of this intellectual individualism which Godwin advocated that he should distrust a highly-organised form of government. He continually insists that government interference with the individual citizen ought not to be tolerated beyond what is absolutely necessary to preserve the peace of society. The actual misery of communities is accounted for by excess of government which is always coercive, and the only real hope of states lies in a completely organised appeal to the reason of individual citizens. There can be no doubt about the moral earnestness on the one hand, and the moral insight on the other, which underlie this political theory. It was a deliberate act of faith in the possibility of establishing a high altruistic morality by means of an appeal to the individual reason. Therein lies its moral earnestness. And there is distinct moral insight in the condemnation of such morality as may be produced by compulsion as being even socially useless. But if its moral insight is unquestionable, its psychological insight is less so. Men's moral education does not come primarily or principally from reason, which is only the power of reflecting upon and forming correct judgments about their experience, but from the very fact of experience itself. The most obvious social virtues—patience and courage and mercy and justice and affection—are the gradual and almost unconscious results of social experience, and reason is powerless as a moral teacher until it has been filled by such experience with a moral content. Men and nations alike must pass a long apprenticeship to virtue. The development of social virtue must depend finally upon a more complete organisation of the means of social experience. To be more closely bound together by ties of mutual



responsibility, to be made continually more interdependent one upon another, to be so placed that we may feel increasingly the claims of others upon us and the power of others to serve us—these are the real conditions of moral growth. Now this increasing complexity of social relations is a distinctive feature of our actual civilization, and it has opened up in the sphere of government a new vista of possibilities and aims. Shelley and Godwin knew government only as a piece of coercive machinery, to be tolerated only so far as was necessary for the preservation of social peace. For us it is becoming more and more the positive organisation of good and healthy influences upon the individual citizens of the state. It aims at fixing upon us our mutual responsibilities, at drawing us more closely together in our relations of natural dependence. Godwin and Shelley thought of government as an organised oppression of the weak by the strong, and therefore the less of it they must have the better. We are getting to conceive of it more and more as an organised assistance of the weak by the strong, and therefore the more of it we can have the better.

Such, then, is the contrast between Shelley's political theory and that which is all but universally accepted by us in the England of to-day. And yet it was Shelley's influence which proved to be one of the most potent causes in effecting the change from the one to the other. The deep moral earnestness which he breathed into the great work of political reform became the inspiration of that popular interest in politics which has gradually developed the new political possibilities I have just described. He surrounded with the halo of his passionate conviction principles which for others were mere otiose conventions or, worse still, concessions to an irresistible necessity. Here, for instance, is the kind of almost religious earnestness which Shelley naturally imported into a current political agitation. It ought perhaps to be recorded that he was only a little over nineteen



when he wrote these words in his famous *Address to the Irish People*, and at nineteen much unregulated and superficial enthusiasm is possible. But Shelley's enthusiasm was certainly not superficial. It enlisted to the end of his days his best thought and his most strenuous interest in the service of politics. Here, then, is how he writes at nineteen. "All religions are good which make men good, and the way that a person ought to prove that his method of worshipping God is best, is for himself to be better than all other men. Do not enquire if a man be a heretic, a Quaker, a Jew, or a heathen: but if he be a virtuous man, if he loves liberty and truth, if he wish the happiness and peace of human kind. Be calm, mild, deliberate, patient. Think and talk and discuss. Be free and be happy, but first be wise and good." It no doubt argued a great deal of political naïveté in Shelley that he could address such sentiments to the Dublin populace in 1812, or indeed to any populace at any moment; but it argued also a true instinct about the conditions and responsibilities of political leadership. No man can lead except he proves himself worthy of being followed, and one of the invariable elements of such proof with the people is unhesitating conviction, even if it be of an ideal higher than they can themselves appreciate. There is no more striking evidence of Shelley's absolute sincerity of purpose in everything he undertook than this—that his ideal morality of love and justice and toleration was no mere poetic luxury, but was the implied basis of all his most deliberate and serious schemes of political reform. In that unfinished fragment entitled *A Philosophical View of Reform*, of which Professor Dowden some years ago gave us an analysis from the manuscript copy which had been entrusted to him, there is as much proof of this as in any of his earlier political writings. And this, remember, is the most sustained and serious prose writing he has left behind, and was the work of his perfect maturity. Here are some instances, taken at random, of the depth of moral purity

and sincerity with which Shelley discusses political hopes and aims. "War waged from whatever motive extinguishes the sentiment of reason and justice in the mind. The motive is forgotten, or only adverted to in a mechanical and habitual manner. No fallacious and indirect motive to action can subsist in the mind without weakening the effect of those which are genuine and true. The person who has been accustomed to subdue men by force will be less inclined to the trouble of convincing or persuading them." "There is one thing which vulgar agitators endeavour to flatter the most uneducated part of the people by proposing, which they ought not to do nor to require, and that is retribution." "Men having been injured desire to injure in return. This is falsely called an universal law of human nature; it is a law from which many are exempt, and all in proportion to their virtue and cultivation." "The patriot will be foremost to publish the boldest truths in the most fearless manner, yet without the slightest tincture of personal malignity." Here is certainly an unintentional portrait of himself:—"The true patriot will endeavour to enlighten and unite the nation, and animate it with enthusiasm and confidence." If ever there was an English patriot, it was this lonely English exile and poet, whose heart is so stirred to its depths by the ills of his native country that he longs to throw himself into the contest in her defence, that for her sake he is willing to give up his devotion to the Muse, and is able to persuade himself in all honesty that "poetry is very subordinate to moral and political science."

But it was not in truth Shelley's deliberate arguments that made him the great influence for good in English politics that he unquestionably has been, especially among the more ardent and revolutionary spirits. What he taught us best, he taught us as a poet—not in set formula or formal doctrine, but through the sensations of wonder and delight in the things of the free spirit which he felt himself and was able to make us feel. And because he taught them so

to us, we have been able to expand them into positive principles of political and social morality which carry us farther than he could have foreseen. He placed the eternal principles of justice and truth and tolerance in so pure an atmosphere of feeling that they became intelligible ideals to be voluntarily and enthusiastically accepted and lived for, instead of mere authoritative counsels of perfection imposed by others and unintelligently and grudgingly accepted by us. He stood for the great moral principle that purity of aim demands purity of method, that if men desire mercy and justice and tolerance they can get them only by self-restraint and just patient unwearied struggle, and that if men did get them otherwise, they would have turned in the getting into Dead-Sea fruit. He broke in pieces the false idol of authority which men had worshipped—viz., the mere coercion of human souls into unintelligent submission, and he led us into the mysterious shrine where the true goddess of authority sits enthroned among the deep inner powers of natural influence of life upon life. Thus, like all the inspired teachers, he taught us more and better than he knew.

## VII

But has Shelley had any influence on English theology? Perhaps his influence here has been greater than anywhere else. Of course naturally there are some people who do not take their theology from the poets. But there are others who do: and they are the people whom the poets alone can teach the deep things of the spirit. For what Religion demands is an immediate vision, an instinctive certainty, of the Eternal behind the transitory. And that is just what the real poet gives in a strange new way which is all his own. Of course all really great theologians have had much of the poet in them, and they have always learned whatever they have certainly known of God and the soul through their

imagination. Theology lives by the essential poetry that is in it—by its revelation to men's hearts of a living God. The moment it degenerates into pious phrase or hardens into rigid quasi-scientific definition, it is dead and prates to men's ears of a dead god only.

Perhaps the most interesting feature in Shelley's character, and that too which coloured his whole life and work, was his religious sensitiveness. Unless we are willing to impute to him a mere iconoclastic instinct, which the modesty and severity of his whole life completely belie, the only thing which will explain his violent denunciations of Christianity is an extremely sensitive habit of religious feeling. By this of course I do not mean pious or devout feeling, for of such a feeling Shelley never showed any sign. But it is quite possible to have genuine religious feeling which is independent of that—a sense of absolute dependence upon, and responsibility to, the Life which explains and inspires our own. The whole of Shelley's poetry witnesses to a feeling of this kind; and as it seems to me his denunciations of what he called Christianity witness to it equally. For what enrages him against Christianity as he conceives it is that it is not Christian. It is indeed not only not a development of Christ's spirit, but it is a denial of it. This of course is far too sweeping an indictment even of that popular travesty of Christianity which the unhistorical and history-hating Shelley insisted upon taking for Christianity itself. The great growth of organisations, institutions, activities, aspirations, beliefs, through which the Spirit or Living Will of Christ is trying to make itself felt in the affairs of this world, he wished to reduce to the measure of a few perverted beliefs, not even always gathered from some formal system of theology, but culled often from the mere popular degradation of theology, and that at a moment when Christianity had become absolutely paralysed through unbelief in itself. Yet Shelley was perfectly sincere in his representation of Christianity as the elaborated denial of Christ. Degraded doctrines



of punishment, degrading and degraded conceptions of God, and worse than all a degraded system of chicanery established as the means of man's religious salvation—this was Christianity to Shelley, and I suppose it was Christianity to the great majority of Shelley's contemporaries. That men tolerated this travesty of Christianity and conformed to it in an age when—save for Methodism—religious faith, religious feeling, and religious activity were all alike dead, seems to me one proof the more how entirely irreligious they were. That Shelley denounced and defied it is at least negative witness to his religion. He had recognised that that at least was not religion.

Shelley's great quarrel with this travesty of religion was that it insisted on divorcing man from nature. That divorce was the perverted heritage of the beautiful unworldliness of the peasantry or serfs of the Middle Age, and of the unbending hatred of the world of the English Puritans. But the world had learned another lesson since then—a lesson which ought to have opened its heart and its mind alike to a new revelation of God. If the Church had really been alive, it must have received that revelation. But it was not, and so it fell to Shelley to discover that God was greater and nobler and better than the Church would admit Him to be, and to proclaim that the Church had denied the true God and was worshipping a false one. And again Shelley believed that Christianity imputed to God a purposeless cruelty and a vengeful malignity, and his outraged heart burst into indignant denial of a god who could violate the most sacred affections which he was said himself to have inspired. Evidently such a god could not be. The deepest things in nature, the eternal heart of life which beats always and everywhere the same; and the deepest things of the human heart, those elemental and universal feelings which make us men—these must at least witness to God. God might transcend them infinitely, but He could not possibly be lower in the scale than they. This was what Shelley



felt and uttered, while others who did not care so much for God's honour as to strive against the false idols of the den, carelessly flung at him the name of Atheist. And since Shelley's day, it is exactly his religious centre, the centre that he discovered by an immediate instinct, which has become the centre for every really progressive theology, for every honest endeavour to state more clearly and more truly what men know of God. We no longer fear to say that we cannot know God except in terms of humanity, of human feeling, of human effort, of human hopes. The most orthodox of Christian theologians will not only admit, but assert that this and nothing else *is* and always has been Christianity, the revelation of God in Christ, *i.e.* the revelation of Him through human feeling and human endeavour and human achievement. Shelley has himself stated the doctrine in terms which the theologian might accept. Only when Shelley stated it, he stated it as Christ's teaching and raged against Christianity because it had denied it. Now the theologian claims it as the eternal and necessary teaching of Christianity because the teaching of Christ. Here is Shelley's statement of it in the *Essay on Christianity*. "The perfection of the human and the Divine character is thus asserted to be the same. Man, by resembling God, fulfils most accurately the tendencies of his nature: and God comprehends within Himself all that constitutes human perfection. Thus, God is a model through which the excellence of man is to be estimated, whilst the *abstract* perfection of the human character is the type of the actual perfection of the Divine."

And has not all that great heritage of hope as to the future of man, which is one of the deepest and most permanent elements of religion, come down to us purified, transformed, glorified by the splendid faith of the *Prometheus Unbound*, that great song of unquenchable hope? Surely the *Prometheus* has been one of the most Christian poems of the century with its glorious stoicism, its intelligence of suffering

as the ordinary way of progress, its great proclamation of the necessity of the *Via Crucis*, and its unconquerable hope in the future of redeemed humanity.

## VIII

Shelley's undoubted influence in the world of ideas is intensified for those who can feel the charm of his life and character. For however we may judge certain actions of his life, and however little right we may have to judge the man himself, we are all free to yield to the fascination of a stern and simple character. He had indeed many of the marks of the prophet. He believed in his mission with that self-assertion which is yet so obviously unselfish, or rather selfless, peculiar to really great and earnest men. He felt that what he spoke must be heard, not because he uttered it, but because it was all-important for men to hear. He was possessed with the sense of this prophetic gift. Nowhere has he expressed it with more inspired conviction than in the "*Ode to the West Wind*."

"Drive my dead thoughts over the universe,  
Like withered leaves, to quicken a new birth;  
And, by the incantation of this verse,  
Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth  
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!  
Be through my lips to unawakened earth  
The trumpet of a prophecy!"

And, again, he had the great prophetic gift of instinctive directness and sincerity of purpose. He was absolutely single-minded. Sincerity was for him the absolute quality of life, and pretence its negation. He was certainly no admirer of force. He did not even appreciate at its true worth the part which force must play in all moral reform. But at any rate it was a sign of life, of real living will; and he was ready to welcome it in comparison with that awful incubus of death, "*Old Custom*." Kingcraft and priestcraft often seem mere stage figures of Shelley's private demonology, the creations of a warped imagination. But his

denunciation of them was absolutely sincere and impersonal. They were the enemies of justice and truth, and must be hated and resisted by all lovers of freedom. Only a man of the simplest sincerity could have judged himself with such justice and sanity as he did when he wrote:—"After all I cannot but be conscious, in much of what I write, of an absence of that tranquility which is the attribute and accompaniment of power." And here is his own estimate of one of his own poems which deserves to stand as the final estimate of all his work:—"I felt that it was in many respects a genuine picture of my own mind. I felt that the sentiments were true, not assumed."

And lastly, he had the solitariness of soul and the stoical temper of the prophet. He loved the great solitary spirits, like Ahasuerus and Prometheus and Zonoras. He was drawn into their presence, he was held there, by the bonds of spiritual kinship. These men whose "souls had wedded wisdom," who were "raised above their fellow-men by thought," were own brothers to his soul. With all his ideal optimism, with all his faith in the new heavens and the new earth, or at least in a new humanity, he was a solitary, and a stoic. He felt that to be true to the heavenly vision man must often fall back upon himself. "It is our will," he says, in *Julian and Maddalo*,

"Which thus enchains us to permitted ill.  
We might be otherwise; we might be all  
We dream of, happy, high, majestic.  
Where is the beauty, love, and truth, we seek,  
But in our minds? And, if we were not weak,  
Should we be less in deed than in desire?"

And Maddalo replies,—

"Ay, *if* we were not weak,—and we aspire  
How vainly! to be strong. You talk Utopia!"

But Julian answers,—

"It remains to know,  
. . . . And those who try may find  
*How* strong the chains are which our spirit bind:

Brittle perchance as straw. We are assured  
Much may be conquered, much may be endured,  
Of what degrades and crushes us. We know  
That we have power over ourselves to do  
And suffer—*what*, we know not till we try,  
But something nobler than to live and die.  
So taught the kings of old philosophy  
Who reigned before religion made men blind;  
And those who suffer with their suffering kind  
Yet feel this faith Religion.”

Shelley was really a great strenuous soul, suffering, and battling, and prophesying for the hope of the new day. Let his last word to us be that crowning prophecy of life, with which the *Prometheus* ends.

“To suffer woes which hope thinks infinite;  
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;  
To defy Power which seems omnipotent;  
To love, and bear; to hope till hope creates  
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates:  
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;  
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be  
Good, great, and joyous, beautiful and free;  
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.”

A. L. LILLEY.





## Thomas Carlyle

**T**HACKERAY likened the darkness with which Swift was overwhelmed to the fate that comes upon an empire and destroys it. Some such thought must occur, even to the enthusiastic admirer, when he thinks of Carlyle and his reputation. To-day his fame is largely a matter of tradition; he is not the living, profound influence that made him the greatest force in the early and the middle Victorian era. Time was when no author was more quoted than he; when multitudes listened to his words, and took them to heart as from one inspired. He aroused statesmen; and, strangely enough, his utterances were repeated with more or less approbation, in many pulpits. To name some of the finest minds that have made our century glorious is to pay tribute to Carlyle: Ruskin, Dickens, Froude, John S. Mill, Huxley, Lecky, John Morley, Tennyson, to select but a few, all bowed before this fascinating personality. For several generations young men at the commencement of their careers went to him for guidance, and found in his writings the gospel whereby their lives were ennobled and rendered of service to their fellow-creatures. They went in good company, and had the mighty Goethe on their side. He had noticed Carlyle when a biography and a few essays were all upon which a judgment could be given, and at once pointed out the characteristic which was to distinguish their writer in future years. "Carlyle is a moral force of great importance." A moral force! In these days, if it is admitted that he is a force at all, the admission is generally accompanied by an insistence that he is, in

the domains of religion, politics, and social life, an immoral force. His teachings, formerly hailed as a new evangel, fruitful of good for mankind, are now contemptuously dismissed as nothing more than adaptations, in strange forms, of old thoughts; and worthless, where they are not absolutely harmful.

This phenomenon of appreciation and depreciation is not explainable by asserting that a mistake was made by people who regarded him as a prophet, or that we are making a mistake in not taking him as one. Both sides are in a sense right. A consideration of the permanent and of what may be called the transitory elements in Carlyle's works may give us the solution to the difficulty. Shakespere's plays, it can be safely assumed, were applauded in his lifetime for reasons very different from those for which we treasure them. Their novelty would impress as much, if not more, than their style; their plots as much as their poetry; and their references to current customs and events of the period would at least equal in interest their power and charm. They were written to be acted; but we of this century agree with Charles Lamb, and prefer to read them in our libraries, where their qualities as stage-plays are forgotten; and their marvellous art, their poetry, their insight, their pictures of men and women, their tragedy and comedy, are alone remembered. The glare of the foot-lights has gone; we carry with us what Shakespere thought on life and death, and it abides with us for ever.

This higher way of honouring the greatest mind the world has known was the work of some two centuries. We all know the obscurity into which Shakespere fell for many years. The glamour of newness having disappeared, it necessitated time to form a correct estimate, to understand his pre-eminent place in English literature, to discriminate between Shakespere the dramatist of the Elizabethan era, and Shakespere the poet of all eras and of the world.

Of course, that Carlyle's intellectual status is analogous to Shakespere's is not pretended; but this

instance of the rise, depression, and ultimate triumph of a writer's fame illustrates what is almost a law; it demonstrates—and there are many other examples to strengthen it—that the things making a man famous with his contemporaries are not always those which render him memorable by succeeding ages. The principle underlying it may be applied to Carlyle.

Before doing so, we must refer to another—and a special—reason some assign for the loosening of Carlyle's hold upon his countrymen. There is no doubt whatever that the publication of Froude's biography, and particularly of the *Reminiscences*, created a revulsion of feeling that was for the time ruinous to Carlyle's reputation. The section that had always been hostile to him rejoiced in this revelation of the private and inner life of the great man. Here he is, they exclaimed, your hero! See how he treated his wife, how he spoke of his friends! Here, delineated by his trusted disciple, by his own hand, he stands; and how mean, splenetic, envious, malevolent, utterly without a shred of greatness in his character! It was a consolation to them that Carlyle was the poor creature they represented him to be. To read Froude's volumes and the *Reminiscences* again, after the lapse of years, is to be convinced that few things have been more disgraceful in our criticism than the reception they met with. It was as if a herd of wolves, hungry with long waiting, had at last their victim in their claws, and battered upon the flesh with vicious snarling. These critics considered it consistent with the dignity of English literature to drag down to their own level him who had been at its head, and its representative to the world, for half a century. An edifying spectacle! With malice enough, how easy to point out the failings, the shortcomings, of the finest natures! Easy—and surely how vile! Most of these attacks were anonymous and bore the evidence of complete ignorance of Carlyle and his works; they were, probably, the productions of gentry who, with generous impartiality and a guinea, would write on



any side, and display an equal littleness and fatuity on all. Whether the *Reminiscences* should have been published or not is a question idle to discuss. From a literary point of view, they are remarkable; they are the most valuable addition to that class of literature in which the French are so excellent, and we so poor. Their interest is as great as we find in Rousseau's *Confessions*; there is a deeper personal note, a nobler utterance than in Rousseau. Strength, a tenderness almost too sacred for words, humour that has tears in it, a never-forgotten sorrow such as few of us have to bear; we see and read of here. A wonderful self-portrayal—and howled at by the critics as the babbling of a vain old man! "The average criticism," says Mr. Leslie Stephen, "of that most tragical and pathetic monologue—in reality a soliloquy to which we have somehow been admitted—that prolonged and painful moan of remorse and desolation coming from a proud and intensely affectionate nature in its direst agony—a record which will be read with keen sympathy and interest when ninety-nine of a hundred of the best contemporary books have been abandoned to the moths—has been such as would have been appropriate for the flippant assault of some living penny-a-liner upon the celebrities of to-day. The critics have had an eye for nothing but the harshness and the gloom, and have read without a tear, without even a touch of sympathy, a confession more moving, more vividly reflecting the struggles and the anguish of a great man, than almost anything in our literature."

Perhaps the truest thing said of Carlyle was that he did for English thought and literature "the work of a sort of spiritual volcano." On the whole his influence was destructive, and not constructive. He was not a trained, scientific reasoner. He preached from one text, and that text was of one word, Sincerity, and in it he included duty, honesty, fortitude. Life was a battle: let us see to it that at its end we can feel we had done right, though we may

not have achieved happiness. "Think of living! Thy life, wert thou the pitifullest of all the sons of earth is no idle dream, but a solemn reality. It is thy own; it is all thou hast to front eternity with." We are here for a moment; above us are the unheeding stars, around us the great silences, beyond us eternity and God—therefore let us bear ourselves worthily. We might argue the matter; we might agree, with Schopenhauer, that life was not worth living; its brevity, for one thing, militating against its value. But Carlyle will not tolerate this. Life has its uses; there are shams at any rate to destroy; we can wage war against wrong. "What is man himself but a symbol of God? Is not all that he does symbolical,—a revelation to sense of the mystic God-given power that is in him?" If this be true, then each human being is in some sort a manifestation of the Supreme Intelligence, and life is sacred, and has a sacred purpose. Convinced as Carlyle was of this, he as strongly held that most of his fellow-creatures were fools, who required to be led, and, if need be, dragooned, into the right path. "There is work on God's wide earth for all men that He has made with hands and hearts," and at the same time believed that only a few were capable of real work; and to these elect the others must bow and render service. "The mass of men consulted at hustings, upon any high matter whatsoever, is as ugly an exhibition of human study as the world sees."

It is this contempt for "men consulted at hustings" that renders Carlyle's writings on the political questions of his time unsatisfactory when searched for remedies for the evils he so vehemently denounced. They were not the outcome of a practical acquaintance with politics, the theories of one who had been in actual contact with the people. Peasant though he was by birth, his instincts were aristocratic and exclusive, and these were strengthened by the Calvinism in which he grew up. He "dropped dogmas out of his creed," yet he was a Calvin in attitude of

thought all his life, and this coloured his ideas whenever he dealt with the political problems of his own day. His nature was of the kind that was enough for itself; it required little or no outward sustenance in the shape of companionship. His own thoughts sufficing, he was solitary and self-centred. It was so at school and at the university, where, generally, young men make many friends. At Edinburgh, his concern was to discover a fence between his coarser fellow-creatures and his more sensitive self. The six years he spent at out-of-the-way Craigenputtock after his marriage would tend to harden his sense of isolation from the world. They were years of hard thought and hard work. He wrote at Craigenputtock on Burns, and on German subjects. He wrote there *Sartor Resartus*. But he did not take very much notice of the events which were then convulsing the kingdom. His opinions and his style were formed in the wilderness; his removal to London did not alter the one or the other. He came as a prophet, with a prophet's sternness and eloquence, and the message he had to deliver he delivered with a prophet's fervour. He was the friend and companion during the forty years of his sojourn in London of the greatest men and women of that time. Many of them differed widely, fundamentally, from him. There is no sign in the records of their conversations and arguments that Carlyle ever deviated from the views he brought with him from Craigenputtock. His name was associated with various public movements, but he never took any active, personal, intimate share in them. He would write on them; he left to others the actual work. He is not to be blamed for this. The man of ideas is more essential than, and he may legitimately leave his ideas to be carried out by, inferior men. But the man of ideas, if he would be successful, must have faith in his instruments, must believe that other men, not so far-seeing as he, are as honest, and perhaps more capable in the reduction of principles to practice. There is this contradiction in Carlyle, that while he



sympathised with the individual, and loved him, he often regarded the mass of men with disdain and bitterness. They could do no good thing, they did not want to do any good thing; they were blind, deaf, insensible to the better influences; they must be driven, drilled into obedience, even the "beneficent whip" might be used to stir them up. Carlyle teaches us that every human being is a manifestation of the Eternal; he implies that, gathered together, looked at as a whole, human beings are a little better than animals. Men are not likely to listen with patience to a teacher with such sentiments. Carlyle's greatest power was his imagination, tempered by his grim humour, and his pathos. He uses these gifts as an artist, not as the historian, the political economist, and did so in spite of himself. He is struck by an incident, he comes upon some one lifted above the common ruck by position, circumstances, character; and instantly his imagination is in a blaze. The incident is marked upon the memory for ever; the man or woman is drawn in a few sharp, vivid, illuminating lines that cannot be obliterated. No modern writer approaches him in this power of delineation. His imagination falls short of the highest in that it is spasmodic, partial, arbitrary. It is not the severe, serene imagination that counts nothing base, and reveals all to us in even, penetrating light. Dazzled by a part, the whole escapes him. This, and his firm belief in the stupidity of mankind, and contempt for the remedies propounded by others for social ills, and his inexperience of affairs, render him incompetent to a large degree to judge of the questions that agitated his generation, and give an appearance of crudity to the measures he himself proposed, and supported with such force, such glowing confidence, and with a sincerity that none could doubt, an impressiveness without equal in English letters.

*Chartism, Past and Present, Latter Day Pamphlets, and Shooting Niagara—and After*, are Carlyle's political testaments. The "condition of England" is their



theme, and denunciation is their tone. Distrust of the people, contempt for their rulers, ridicule for the schemes of politicians, meet us on every page. What the people want is a strong governor, whom they must obey without question. They are not fit to govern themselves; they are given up to materialism and sottishness; and those who might rule them—the aristocratic classes—are lost in pleasure and idleness. If England would not perish, then she must set up her strong man, and trust without murmur in him. Only by doing this, can she save herself. The strong man would choose his subordinates; together they would reign over the people, with a rule of iron, for their own good. The lazy would be made to work; the vicious would be punished; the masses would be trained in habits of obedience; the surplus population would be drafted to the unpeopled parts of the world. Education, morals, and religion would be looked after by the autocrat and his assistants. Speech would be remarkable for its absence; obeying “the wisest and most sacred men that can be got in the world,” the people would not “speak at all unless it is to say that thing that is to be done.” The ideal is a man, “a piece of an animated machine, a wonder of wonders to look at. He will go and obey one man, and walk into the cannon’s mouth for him, and do anything whatever that is commanded of him by his general officer.” The people, who could not be trusted to govern themselves, and to whom it was criminal to give the right to vote on their own affairs, were yet to select their despot. This in itself would be an effort of intelligence in comparison to which all others would be as nothing. That they could do it would be sufficient guarantee of their ability to dispense with a master. But Carlyle never saw the matter in this light. Nor did he see that what he advocated was, reduced to its last analysis, nothing but brute force, which could not only not create the righteousness without which a nation cannot live, but would inevitably plunge it into unheard-of misery, tyranny.

and anarchy. Assuming that such a ruler as Carlyle imagined was chosen, and the functions of government vested in him, and he had complete control over a people whose civilisation had reached a certain pitch of breadth and culture, the hard attainment of many centuries of united, unremitting endeavour, is it possible that he could direct or maintain the ramifications and complications of such an organism? The chances are that he would be a dictator riding roughshod over everybody, or a puppet in the hands of a bureaucracy. There is little to choose between government by a tyrant and government by officials. Both forms tend to corruption and disintegration. The nation submitting to either will not rise, but sink.

Such a scheme of administration could not now be initiated with any hope of permanency in any country. To suggest it for England is a curious instance of how a man of genius, of clear insight on many subjects, can be absolutely blind to the trend of thought in his own day, and unable to understand the character and bent of the English people. This want of appreciation vitiates all Carlyle's outbursts on the "condition of England" question. Carlyle's plan was feasible, perhaps, under the feudal system, of which it was in some sort a copy. But in the nineteenth century, the feudal system is a curiosity; interesting as a study; to be investigated, if leisure permits, but certainly not imitated.

The same want of practicality is observable in the remedies which Carlyle's strong ruler and his "captains of industry" were to apply to the evils the country was suffering from. Some of these remedies had been tried generations ago, and had failed. "His modes of dealing with pauperism and crime," for example, "were in full operation under the despotisms of Henry VII. and Henry VIII.," as Minto points out. The student of history knows that they are not applicable to the England we live in.

The coldly scientific, exact method of reasoning on

political problems was far as possible from Carlyle's own process of approaching them. He hated it so much that he was unjust to the work that was being done by following its rules. We have an illustration of his manner of dealing with them in *Past and Present*, wherein he draws a picture of life in the twelfth century, and contrasts it with life in our century. A picture with all Carlyle's great qualities as an artist in words. One can see St. Edmundsbury and its monastery; the people are sketched as from people Carlyle actually knew; seven hundred years are erased; the kings, and lords, and soldiers, and monks live again. The Abbot Samson is a man after the true Carlyle pattern. A stern, silent man, who had learned to obey before he was called upon to command, who saw his duty and did it, who worked, and had little mercy for those who were slothful, who dispensed justice. Under his rigid discipline the monastery is transformed; its debts are paid; it becomes a centre of civilisation, a light to all men. The Abbot rules; all goes well with them that obey him; badly indeed with them that defy him. He does not always satisfy the monks, who, whatever their failings, had had the perspicacity to choose him. "At one time, on slight cause, some drop making the cup run over, they burst into open mutiny; the Cellarer will not obey, prefers arrest on bread-and-water to obeying; the Monks thereupon strike work; refuse to do the regular chanting of the day, at least the younger part of them with loud clamour and uproar refuse. Abbot Samson has withdrawn to another residence, acting only by messengers; the awful report circulates through St. Edmundsbury that the Abbot is in danger of being murdered by the Monks with their knives! How wilt thou appease this, Abbot Samson! Return; for the Monastery seems near catching fire! Abbot Samson returns; sits in his *Talamus*, or inner room, hurls a bolt or two of excommunication: lo, one disobedient Monk sits in limbo, excommunicated, with foot-shackles on him, all day; and three more our Abbot has gyved 'with the lesser

sentence, to strike fear into the others'! Let the others think with whom they have to do." They do think and repent, and are forgiven. This is Carlyle's comment: "Behave better, ye remiss Monks, and thank Heaven for such an Abbot; or know at least that ye must and shall obey him." The rule of your strong man must not be questioned, even by those to whom he owes his position. They "accomplish the most important social feat a body of men can do, to winnow-out the man that is to govern them." They do it without ballot-boxes, reform bills—and "truly one sees not that, by any winnowing-machine whatever they could" do it better. Ballot-boxes, Reform Bills! "Alas, brethren, how can these, I say, be other than inadequate, be other than failures, melancholy to behold?" And men, having the sense to elect "the fittest, wisest, bravest, best," without the aid of ballot-boxes, must thereafter become as dumb animals, on pain of limbo and gyves! What essential difference there is in electing a man by means of the ballot and in electing him from a list in which he is placed with other men, getting rid of his rivals by a process of elimination, is not explained to us.

The Abbot Samson and his monks are of the past—a past with which Carlyle feels in sympathy, and leaves with regret. How different is the present! There is no rule, no obedience; no order, but, instead, a raging confusion. There is no reverence in men; they are all drunk with the one idea of wealth. "The hell of these days is the infinite terror of Not getting on, especially of Not making money." The nation has taken Midas as its hero. But the fate that befell him awaits us. "Midas longed for gold, and insulted the Olympians. He got gold, so that whatever he touched became gold,—and he, with his long ears, was little the better for it. Midas had misjudged the celestial music-tones; Midas had insulted Apollo and the gods; the gods gave him his wish, and a pair of long ears, which also were a good appendage to it. What a truth in these old fables!" The country is richer than



ever it was; "we can spend thousands where we once spent hundreds; but can purchase nothing good with them." There is no real work done by which the world benefits; no work of the sort that ennobles the worker. "Even in the meanest sorts of labour, the whole soul of a man is composed into a kind of real harmony, the instant he sets himself to work." "Destiny, on the whole, has no other way of cultivating us," than by work. But we do not work in this spirit; we work to accumulate money. We are the slaves of Mammon. Abbot Samson lived as if God were ever present to him, he walked with God. We run after the Devil. "Alas, how, in thy soft-hung Longacre vehicle, of polished leather to the bodily eye, of red-tape philosophy, of expediciencies, clubroom moralities, Parliamentary majorities to the mind's eye, thou beautifully rollest; but knowest thou whitherward?" The "free and independent Franchiser" prates of liberty. "Thou who walkest in a vain show, looking out with ornamental dilettante sniff and serene supremacy at all Life and all Death; and amblest jauntily; perking up thy poor talk into crotchets, thy poor conduct into fatuous somnambulisms; and art as an 'enchanted ape' under God's sky, where thou mightest have been a man, had proper schoolmasters and conquerors, and constables with cat-o'-nine tails, been vouchsafed thee; dost thou call that 'liberty'?" The liberty we pride ourselves upon, "turns out, before it have long continued in action, with all men flinging up their caps round it, to be, for the working millions a liberty to die by want of food; for the idle thousands and units, alas, a still more fatal liberty to live in want of work; to have no earnest duty to do in this God's-world any more." If we desire that the "inner fountains of life may again begin, like eternal Light-fountains, to irradiate and purify our bloated, swollen, foul existence, drawing nigh, as at present, to nameless death," there must be "a radical universal alteration of our regimen and way of life," a "most agonising divorce between us

and our chimeras, luxuries and falsities"; and "a most toilsome, all but impossible return to Nature, and her veracities and her integrities." In the doctrine of a "return to Nature," Carlyle is a disciple of Wordsworth. We may discover a panacea for our ills if we return to Nature, but the prospect is not encouraging when we contemplate the career of its two most distinguished advocates. Wordsworth commenced his with a generous enthusiasm for liberty, taught to him by his native hills and dales and streams; he ended it as a reactionary. Carlyle, as a political guide, would conduct the community to a bondage of the weak by the strong. These conclusions, springing from an individual return to Nature—which is a spiritual and mental state, much more than the actual fact—are not cheering. Carlyle was not a happy man. The spectacle of Wordsworth in his old age, its purposeless serenity in sharp, unpleasing contrast with the high aspirations and endeavours for humanity of his youth, is not inspiring. But personal idiocyncrasy and the facts of life are sometimes too powerful for the soundest doctrine.

Carlyle, it must be admitted, has little to give to the "practical" politician searching for a "plan." He is not a Bentham, ready, at short notice, to supply a constitution complete even to details, or to settle the universe on new lines. The "practical" politician, with a sneer, consigns Carlyle to perdition. Your "practical" man is a man of few, and narrow, ideas; his pleasing way is to scoff at what he does not understand. He scoffs a great deal.

Carlyle is weak on the constructive side. But on another, and equally valuable, side he is strong indeed. He came as a prophet of old, crying woe unto the people because of their misdeeds. He struck at evils manifest to all, permitted to continue through apathy, self-interest, ignorance, or fear. He thundered against them with all his might. Speaking in tones which had never been heard in England before, he shook the nation to the centre. His voice awoke men, shamed

them, and inspired them. He came as an accusing conscience to men sunk in gross materialism, in pleasure, in idleness, in selfishness. Our "unexampled prosperity" was a tragedy; our wealth a poison that is surely killing us. If the rich are becoming richer, the poor are becoming poorer. We pursue ignoble ends; the national life is a degradation. He does not spare the weaknesses of the poor; but his sternest denunciations are for the rich. We are brothers no longer; every man is for himself; and the Devil follows hard upon all. All high, all worthy things are forgotten; and unless they are remembered, the people will perish. For all human things do require to have an "Ideal in them; to have some Soul in them, as we said, were it only to keep the Body unputrefied. And wonderful it is to see how the Ideal or Soul, place it in what ugliest Body you may, will irradiate said Body with its own nobleness; will gradually, incessantly, mould, modify, new form or reform said ugliest Body, and make it at last beautiful, and to certain degree divine! Oh, if you could dethrone that Brute-god Mammon, and put a Spirit-god in his place! One way or other he must and will have to be dethroned." Life for the poor is a miserable thing. "Life was never a May-game for men: in all times the lot of the dumb millions born to toil was defaced with manifold sufferings, injustices, heavy burdens, avoidable and unavoidable; not play at all, but hard work that made the sinews sore and the heart sore." "It is not to die, or even to die of hunger that makes a man wretched. . . . But it is to live miserable we know not why; to work sore and yet gain nothing; to be heart-worn, weary, yet isolated, unrelated, girt-in with a cold universal *Laissez-faire*: it is to die slowly all our life long, imprisoned in a deaf, dead, infinite injustice. . . . This is and remains forever intolerable to all men whom God has made." "Supply-and-demand is not the one law of Nature; cash-payment is not the sole nexus of man with man. . . . Deep, far deeper than supply-and-demand, are laws, obligations sacred as man's life

itself." He that learns what these are, "shall work and prosper with noble rewards." He that does not learn them—"perpetual mutiny, contention, hatred, isolation, execration, shall wait on his footsteps, till all men discern that the thing which he attains, however golden it look or be, is not success, but the want of success." "That brutish God-forgetting Profit-and-loss philosophy and Life-theory, which we hear jangled on all hands of us, in senate-houses, spouting-clubs, leading-articles, pulpits and platforms, everywhere as the Ultimate Gospel and candid Plain-English of Man's Life, from the throats and pens and thoughts of all but all men!"

The teaching of Carlyle on this subject is an amplification of the Scriptural "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." There is no righteousness in a civilisation which is based upon a never-ending, cruel competition among men. We put forth our energies for the meanest things of life; we have lost any desire for the highest. To amass wealth; to get ahead of our fellow-creatures, at whatever cost or injury to them; is our ambition. The capitalist who takes advantage of the poverty of his workmen to pay them not what they deserve but what their condition forces them to accept, and who rises to affluence and social distinction on their labours; the landowner, the aristocrat, who lives for pleasure only, doing none of the things his station would enable him to do for the national benefit; these are our heroes! A curse is on the people that sets such men upon pedestals for admiration and worship! Heroes! Let them sun themselves in prosperity while they may. There will come a time when "men's bitter necessities will endure them no more, when nature's patience with them is done; and there is no road or footing any farther, and the abyss yawns sheer!" The people must turn from them, and seek after righteousness. In honest work is salvation to be found. Each man working courageously, patiently, as in God's sight. Justice, mercy, and wisdom will



come of it. "To make some nook of God's creation a little fruitfuller, better, more worthy of God; to make some human hearts a little wiser, manfuller, happier,—more blessed, less accursed! It is work for a God." "Unstained by wasteful deformities, by wasted tears or heart's blood of men, or any defacement of the Pit, noble fruitful Labour, growing ever nobler, will come forth, the grand sole miracle of Man; whereby Man has risen from the low places of this Earth, very literally, into divine Heavens. Ploughers, spinners, builders; prophets, poets, kings; Brindleys and Goethes, Odins and Arkwrights; all martyrs, and noble men, and gods, are of one grand host; immeasurable; marching ever forward since the beginning of the world. The enormous, all-conquering, flame-crowned host, noble every soldier of it; sacred and alone noble. Let him who is not of it hide himself; let him tremble for himself. Stars at every button cannot make him noble; sheaves of Bathgarters, nor bushels of Georges; nor any other contrivance but manfully enlisting in it, valiantly taking place and step in it."

It may be rightly claimed for Carlyle that much of the social awakening in our country, the recognition by the rich and highly-placed of their responsibilities to the poor and degraded, the breaking-down of barriers between class and class, the amelioration of the condition of the toiling masses, the feelings of kinship and brotherhood that have marked the years since he wrote, are directly and indirectly traceable to his teaching. His warnings have been efficacious where his inspiration has not sufficed. The capitalists and the aristocrats are still with us. But not all of them rest their claims for men's respect upon their money or the sanctity of a privileged caste. They seek to justify their position by public work, by the setting aside of large portions of their wealth to public uses. The lazy nobleman, the grasping capitalists exist, of course, but public opinion is not on their side. This is a good sign. Legislation follows public opinion,

too, in defending the poor from exploitation, in maintaining public rights, in securing some rudiments at least of education, in obtaining an approach to decent living. What has been done has been done slowly, against powerful obstacles, and is not enough. It is a beginning, showing health in the commonwealth. Probably Carlyle would not have approved the lines upon which this development has gone, or the methods adopted to bring about improvement. This does not detract from the great work he did for his generation. We follow paths he did not know towards a destination he had in sight. His gaze was on the high places; we are walking through the valleys to them. His service to us was to tell us of these high places. Fervent, eruptive, even scornful as he sometimes was, his impelling genius was a light that made many dark things clear to us. He re-asserted truths that we, with our "progress by leaps and bounds," were inclined to forget. They were unpalatable; yet they are necessary to be remembered if society is to be held together, and our national life is to be clean and wholesome. He sought to move us by ridicule, anger, denunciations; behind these was a heart sorrowful with the pain and misery, the injustice of the world. He has been compared to Swift, but there is none of that hatred of his kind that pervade's Swift's writings, and renders them too terrible to read. Carlyle has Swift's bitter indignation, with a profound sadness, a pity for the lot of man. There is so much to be done, and so little is done. We lack "self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control." Those who might lead us do nothing; the crowd of hungry, ignorant poor sway this way and that at the will of every charlatan and windbag. The selfishness, the blindness, the fierce struggle of man and man, stung Carlyle into a storm of protest. He could not look upon society moving, as he thought, to destruction, and shrug his shoulders, and pass on, complacent in the belief that, at any rate, he was safe. He must warn, remonstrate, point out the way of escape. But always with his expostu-

lations there blended the note of tenderness. His sternness sprang from his love of his fellow-creatures. The passion of humanity burned within him. Side by side was the conviction that mere wailings, regrets, sentimentalising, availed nothing. The indolent, the vicious and stupid are not cured by words, by visions of Utopias. Carlyle held that they must be taken in hand vigorously. "Life was never a May-game for men." There is no place on the earth for those who would not do their share in supporting the burdens of existence. Every one must contribute something to the helping of mankind on its way. Unwillingness must be met by force, for the advantage of all. Amendment by persuasion is the ideal. Reform by force is a frightful alternative, only to be resorted to when the facts are as frightful. History yields us many instances when force was necessary. Our own history contains them. What is every Act of Parliament but an application of the principle of compulsion to improvement? Force is not only the ultimate argument between nations; it is the instrument used, to the exclusion of almost every other, by a people in the adjustment and maintenance of their affairs. It is the basis of all the schemes of social regeneration—with few exceptions—with which mankind has been familiarised. Force as a means of governing men is as old as the first government of men. It was not because of this element in them that Carlyle's specific plans for remedying the "condition of England" were unacceptable; they were opposed to the instincts and genius of the people. They are forgotten to-day. But what will remain to us for ever is his insistence upon truth and honour, justice and sympathy, in our dealings with our fellow-creatures. These, and not the pursuit of wealth, of social aggrandisement, of commercial greatness, of material power, exalt a nation. It seems a simple lesson, not likely to be forgotten by honest men; but experience shows us that it is one more easily learned than remembered, and in the stress of a false civilisation and crushing competition it

is inconvenient and uncomfortable to bear in mind. Retribution awaits them who neglect it, Carlyle avers; your empire, extend it the world over, shall crumble into pieces if it be not founded on Right.

To be led into the desired haven, to attain the best, we must submit to the great man, or hero. This belief in the hero is one of the controlling ideas in Carlyle's thought. The fashion now is to sneer at him for his enthusiasm, and to account for great men as accidents, more or less, and to depreciate their influence. Instead of moulding, they are moulded by the circumstances, the spirit of their age. They do not create fresh impulses, but incorporate in themselves the floating, vague aspirations or wishes of their contemporaries. They are the embodiment of their time, not the bringers of a new message. Carlyle could not accept such an explanation. To him the great man was the chosen servant of God. "The great man, with his free force direct out of God's own hand." Disbelief in him "is the last consummation of unbelief." "Universal History, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here. They were the leaders of men, these great ones; the modellers, patterns, and, in a wide sense, creators of whatsoever the general mass of men contrived to do or to attain; all things that we see standing accomplished in the world are properly the outer material result, the practical realisation and embodiment of thoughts that dwelt in the Great Men sent into the world; the soul of the whole world's history, it may justly be considered, were the history of these." We must perforce reverence them; they are "the living light fountains." Enlightening the darkness of the world, they shine by the gift of Heaven. "In their radiance all souls feel that it is well with them." They are different from us, but they are not apart from us; "there is a divine relation (for I may well call it such), which in all times unites a great man to other men." Great men ensure the continuity of



progress. A religion, a doctrine, that in its time was of fruitful service to the world, outlives its worth; it becomes a form, strangling efforts to a higher faith, clouding the intellect. The mass of men take no heed, but the strong, great man works out their salvation for them. He points out the way; they grope painfully, slowly, after him. So Carlyle held. In his fascinating *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, wherein he treats of the hero as divinity, prophet, poet, priest, man of letters, and king, Carlyle inculcates his teaching on this subject. A wonderfully stimulating book; it gives us wider vision, sympathy with men and creeds far apart, it may be, from our own prepossessions, charity, and a sense of the infinite mystery of man and the universe. All is good that has done good to men; whatever its shape, or whether we comprehend and appreciate it or not, it is part of the purpose of the Eternal. The core of all religions is the same; the outward appearance changes with the centuries and the needs of men. The wise thing for man to do—and great men teach us at once the necessity and the happiness of it—is to “cease his frantic pretension of scanning this great God’s World in his small fraction of a brain; to know that it had verily, though deep beyond his soundings, a Just Law; that the soul of it was Good; that his part in it was to conform to the Law of the Whole, and in devout silence follow that; not questioning it, obeying it as unquestionable.” The soul of Christianity is the soul of Islam. The one says, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him”; the other, “It is good and wise; God is great!” They, and all other manifestations of religion, mean the same submission to the Highest. From this should follow the brotherhood of man—a brotherhood of love and mutual kindness. How much better the world would be for such a brotherhood!

There is a deep religious sense to be observed in everything Carlyle wrote. But his creed was not orthodox, in the popular acceptation. He uses the words God, Eternal, Power, the Silences, the Immen-

sities, and others, as if they were interchangeable. He speaks of Christ as our divinest Symbol. "Higher has the human thought not yet reached," though, in the same chapter of *Sartor Resartus*, he says, "On the whole, as Time adds much to the sacredness of Symbols, so likewise in his progress he at length defaces, or even desecrates them; and Symbols, like all terrestrial Garments, wax old." "For all things, even Celestial Luminaries, have their rise, their culmination, their decline." Carlyle constantly declares that a Moral Power rules the world, and it is in the light of the qualities he feels this Power to possess that he examines human affairs, and pronounces upon them. This Moral Power moves and works in the world; all good men appeal to it as their Sanction and Authority. The universe attests its existence; the conscience of mankind witnesses to it. It is the standard by which we estimate right and wrong, terms that are meaningless without it. The whole duty of man is to obey this power, and work honestly.

We have the history of his opinions in *Sartor Resartus*, the autobiography of Carlyle's spiritual life. Unique in our literature, this strange, curiously-attractive book is one of the profoundest of our century. It marks an epoch in the intellectual development of those who read it. For him who reads and understands it, the world is no longer the same as before he knew it. Fantastic, humorous, whimsical, mystical, sad, hopeful, it bears the impress of Carlyle's character on every page. If the book is not simple, it has all the other essentials for expressing its author's meaning, and conveying such meaning to the reader. It has ease, vigour, grace, aptness, strength, picturesqueness, flexibility, subtlety. The skill of the true artist animates, illuminates, throughout. The style is congenial to the thought, the language completely congruous with its subject. On the literary side it has the loving craftsman's conscientiousness, pride in his work, desire to find a perfect medium for the translation of his ideas; on the moral and intel-

lectual it has honesty of purpose, intensity of conviction, fearlessness in putting forth views strongly held that may or may not be pleasing to other men.

The chapters in *Sartor Resartus*, to which we need now refer, are, perhaps, those entitled "The Everlasting No," "Centre of Indifference," "The Everlasting Yea," and "Natural Supernaturalism." The hero, Herr Teufelsdröckh, after years of crisis, of transition, finds himself quite shut out from hope. "Doubt had Darkened into Unbelief." Wandering wearisomely through the world, he had "lost all tidings of another and higher." And without faith what is life worth? "Faith is properly the one thing needful." He calls out, "Is there no God, then; but at best an absentee God, sitting idle, ever since the first Sabbath, at the outside of His universe, and seeing it go? Has the word Duty no meaning; is what we call Duty no Divine Messenger and Guide, but a false earthly Fantasm, made up of Desire and Fear?" The world becomes a grim desert, "wherein is heard only the howling of wild beasts, or the shrieks of despairing, hate-filled men." One thing remained: the passion of truth. After a while "the temper of his misery is changed; not fear or whining Sorrow is it, but Indignation and grim fire-eyed Defiance." Thus he reaches the Centre of Indifference. "Pshaw! what is this paltry little dog-cage of an earth? What art thou that sittest whining there? Thou art still nothing." The transition to the Everlasting Yea is a slow process, but it is accomplished. The first step was the annihilation of self, which "unseals his mind's eyes." He communes with Nature, with the life around him. Nature is the "living garment of God." In our fellow-man "the God-Presence is manifested, not to our eyes only, but to our hearts." Love springs in his heart for his fellow-creatures. The meaning of life is partly revealed to him. Men are miserable because they regard happiness as the end, the object of their existence, and cry out that the happiness they expect and imagine they deserve does not come to them. "Foolish

soul! What Act of Legislature was there that thou shouldst be happy? A little while ago thou hadst no right to *be* at all." But "there is in man a Higher than Love of Happiness; he can do without Happiness, and instead thereof find Blessedness! Was it not to preach forth this same Higher that sages and martyrs, the poet and the priest, in all times, have spoken and suffered, bearing testimony, through life and through death, of the Godlike that is in man, and how in the Godlike only has he strength and freedom? . . . Love not Pleasure; love God. This is the Everlasting Yea, wherein all contradiction is solved, wherein whoso walks and works it is well with him." "Do the Duty which lies nearest thee, which thou knowest to be a Duty! Thy second Duty will already have become clearer." The "hour of Spiritual Enfranchisement is even this: when your Ideal World, wherein the whole man has been dimly struggling and inexpressibly languishing to work, becomes revealed and thrown open, and you discover, with amazement enough, . . . that your 'America is here or nowhere.'" The situation that has not its Duty, its Ideal, was never yet occupied by man. Yes, here, in this poor, miserable, hampered, despicable Actual, wherein thou even now standest, here or nowhere is thy Ideal; work it out therefrom, and working, believe, live, be free. So peace comes to those who annihilate self, who are one with Nature—"which is the Time-Vesture of God"—who love God and their fellow-creatures, and do the duty that lies nearest. They come to understand, in the words from the chapter on "Natural Supernaturalism," that "this fair Universe, were it in the meanest province thereof, is in very deed the star-domed City of God; that through every star, through every grass-blade, and most through every Living Soul, the glory of a present God still beams." Time and space are appearances, shadows; the "real Being of whatever was, and whatever is, and whatever will be, *is* even now and for ever." The earth is a vision; the spirit that is in



man alone has reality and is alive. Whence come we? Whither do we go? "Sense knows not, Faith knows not; only that it is through Mystery to Mystery, from God and to God."

There is no necessity to examine all the works of Carlyle. His *French Revolution* is probably the finest literary achievement of the century. When he wrote it, Carlyle was at the height of his powers. The book is magnificent, epic in its grandeur. The tremendous struggle is laid bare for us with an unerring instinct for the essential. The men and women—some terrible as their deeds, others great as their cause—who were leaders in it are etched as in lines of fire, and we are stirred as if ourselves actors in their mighty tragedy. The imagination of a poet is united to dramatic force of presentation. Here is the portrait of Charlotte Corday. "She is of stately Norman figure; in her twenty-fifth year; of beautiful still countenance; her name is Charlotte Corday, heretofore styled D'Armans, while nobility still was. . . . A completeness, a decision is in this fair female Figure. . . . What if she, this fair young Charlotte, had emerged from her secluded stillness suddenly, like a star; cruel-lovely, with half-angelic, half-demonic splendour; to gleam for a moment, and in a moment be extinguished; to be held in memory, so bright, complete was she, through long centuries!" There is not space to quote some of the descriptions—those unsurpassable descriptions, overwhelming in their strength, their startling vividness, their satire, their pathos. *Frederick the Great* comes close to the *French Revolution* in sheer intellectual worth. The *Cromwell* placed the Protector, after two centuries of obloquy, in his right position among the world's great rulers. Carlyle's biographies and essays display his marvellous knowledge, his genius for portraiture, for telling a story, his geniality, and sympathy, and tenderness. As a critic, he rendered a service to us that is in danger of being forgotten. German literature and thought are known to most of us now, but when Carlyle wrote upon them it was

very different. And his essay on Burns is, practically, the origin of all the later criticism of the poet.

Throughout Carlyle's works there runs a tone of sadness, of reverence for the past, of pity for the lot of human-kind, the "sense of tears in human things." Life was something else than a pilgrimage to the sombre imagination of Carlyle. Men pass as through a darkness, stumbling, through miserable days, from silence to silence. Their existence is a burden, gladly laid down; and yet death is a fearful thing. Unhappy human beings, that relief can come only by a means so terrible! During the long, long ages men have toiled and suffered; dim, hapless millions, whose lives were a contention and wretchedness. They have sunk into the earth, and we shall follow them. The riddle of man's life! We cannot solve it. But we can at least, come what may, bear all manfully. Amongst the great teachers who, by their patience, their fortitude, their courage, have brought consolation, inspiration, help, and hope to their fellow-men, there stands the rugged figure, with the careworn face, and the sad, tender eyes, of Thomas Carlyle.

WILLIAM ARTHUR.



## Ralph Waldo Emerson

WRITTEN IN EMERSON'S ESSAYS

“O monstrous, dead, unprofitable world.  
That thou canst hear, and hearing, hold thy way!  
A voice oracular hath pealed to-day,  
To-day a hero's banner is unfurl'd;

“Hast thou no lip for welcome?’—So I said.  
Man after man, the world smiled and passed by;  
A smile of wistful incredulity  
As though one spake of life unto the dead—

“Scornful, and strange, and sorrowful, and full  
Of bitter knowledge. Yet the will is free;  
Strong is the soul, and wise, and beautiful;

“The seeds of godlike power are in us still;  
Gods are we, bards, saints, heroes, if we will!—  
Dumb judges, answer, truth or mockery?”

*Matthew Arnold.*

THIS essay is not, and is not intended to be, a complete study of Emerson. Much has been written of him by American, French, and English critics which is of the highest value, and there remains something yet to be said from a purely literary point of view. But I have nothing to do in these pages with Emerson's purely literary work; my concern with him is of a different kind. We must approach him now as a prophet, as a great ethical teacher related to the life of his century. The question for us is whether he has anything to say to us of supreme value in regard to the ultimate conceptions on which we mould our lives. Can we extract from his writings a real body of doctrine, a veritable gospel for the time in which we live? Every intelligent reader of Emer-



son admits his power and insight, but have we in his writings anything more than brilliant glimpses into the world of ideas—glimpses so brief as to be tantalising? Have we a connected view of life, a permanent and solid body of thought which shall give us sustenance through our toilsome and hard life pilgrimage?

It may be said at once that it is not easy to grasp Emerson as a whole, to seize on his ideas. His delicate genius evades our clumsy methods of siege. He was not a systematic thinker, he did not work by syllogisms, by detailed logical statement, by faultless ratiocination. We do not read him as we read Kant or Hume, but as we read Goethe or Carlyle. He is not so much a philosopher in the technical sense, deep as is his interest in philosophy, as a seer with a remarkable and wellnigh unique intellect; a "Greek head on right Yankee shoulders," as Lowell said of him. He has a clear mind of the "illumination" kind on the one hand, and with leanings very marked to mysticism on the other; he is by turns almost Pagan and almost Pietist; and there is, withal, a certain practical Americanism at the base. He had studied philosophy, especially, as it would appear, that of Fichte, which also influenced Carlyle. He had not studied it in the way in which an academic teacher studies it, but in the way in which Goethe studied the Ethics of Spinoza—by appropriation and assimilation of that which he most needed. Emerson said of himself that though he was not a great poet, yet "all of him there was, was poet." The verdict is true, his nature was essentially poetical; he was, in a very real sense, a "maker," a receptive and yet vascular and original mind. He absorbed most of the subtle influences of his time, and he bodied them forth in a literature which is fascinating and bracing in an unusual degree to such minds as have in some measure reached his own plane of thought or, at least, dimly perceive it aloft in the infinite azure. The influence of his writings, however, is felt in a singular way, in subtle ways of feeling, in impalpable pulsations of intellectual power. He does

not storm the bulwarks of the Celestial City, he does not help you to take the kingdom of heaven by violence, but as you come under the spell of his attractive power, you feel the influences of that kingdom subtly entering your mind, and flooding it with the tides of a new life. He knows no system, he cares nothing for consistency, he proclaims himself "an endless seeker" with no Past behind him. One cannot happily voyage with him over the sea of thought who is hidebound by any convention, however respectable, or who is not prepared for endless intellectual surprises, for unaccustomed inner experiences. He bears us with him to worlds not realised, where the atmosphere is at times so rarefied that we sigh for the grosser medium in the homely valley far below. But he also knows and feels this as truly as we do, and we are reassured that we are in the hands of a perfectly sane man, not a Swedenborg; a mystic if you will, but a mystic with the clear Greek intelligence which knows when to stop, which is true to that fundamental doctrine of Greek criticism, "Not too much."

It is important to note the genesis of Emerson's lofty individuality. He was the finest outcome of the finest sifted English Puritanism transferred to a new soil, clarified, removed from the strain of too urgent tradition, braced by generations of simple, healthy, pious life, and yet early trained by culture and ennobled by the highest kind of study. Born at a time when his environment was spiritually bleak and arid, he happily was able, in his formative period, to enrich his nature by contact with all that was best in the Old World, and to drink at what were then the purest fountains of inspiration, the new thought of Germany and the Lake poetry of England.

The most valuable and essential part of Emerson's writings is contained in the two volumes of the *Essays*, the "Divinity School Address of 1838," etc., for those who are not too critical over occasionally halting metres, in some of the *Poems*. The whole gospel is there. In much of Emerson's later work,

charming and suggestive as it always is to me, I find perpetual echoes of the central ideas of the *Essays*. Let it be understood that there is nothing that Emerson ever wrote which is not worth reading. Such a study as that of Napoleon in the "Representative Men," such remarkable insight as we find pervading the "Conduct of Life," such wisdom and humanity as are visible in so many of the short addresses and papers which often contain some of Emerson's happiest phrases—all these and others are worth serious consideration. But if we would know why Emerson is so true a prophet of the closing century, so true a guide to the intricate labyrinths of the century about to open on us, we must read and re-read the *Essays*. It is there especially we hear the "voice oracular" which awakens us from the routine of dead works, and which summons us to ascend the mountain of transfiguration. The *Essays* are fragmentary, it is true, like the rest of Emerson's writings; but one can distil from them the essential wisdom of this great teacher and inspirer of his day and generation. The very first line of the first essay, that on History, introduces us at once to Emerson's fundamental thought: "There is one mind common to all individual men. Every man is an inlet to the same and to all of the same. He that is once admitted to the right of reason, is made a freeman of the whole estate." If there is one essay, however, which, in a supreme way, embodies Emerson's gospel, it is that on the Over-Soul. Here is Emersonian doctrine pure and unadulterated, the very quintessence of New England Transcendentalism.

The main purpose of Emerson's teaching is to liberate men's minds from the dominion of the vulgar secular order which imposes upon them. He is, as Matthew Arnold truly said of him, the helper and friend of those who would live in the spirit. He once more emphasises in his clear, fresh, and inspiring way, the old doctrine, ever present to the mind of the prophet in all ages, never comprehended by the mere man

of the world, that the things which are seen are temporal, the things which are not seen are eternal. We are governed by shows and illusions, our aims are of the paltriest character, we believe in what we can see, taste, and handle, and in nothing more. When the New Calendar was adopted in the last century, people in England went about asking for their lost days, unable to correct by the mind the errors bred by mere custom. These foolish persons were a type of the average sensual man, who, as in Bunyan's famous vision of the man with the muck-rake, are for ever busied in seeking for rubbish in the dust and straw of the actual, while the golden crown hangs over their empty heads unobserved and uncared for. The common experience confirms the idea expressed alike by Paul and Plato, that there are in each of us two men, the ape and tiger of the lower forms of life, and the ideal man, the heavenly man. The lower man, even in his higher and civilised condition, is perpetually deceived by the evanescent, by the shows and fleeting phenomena of time. His personal ambition is to acquire some external possession, commonly money or means of pleasure, sometimes a certain glitter of external culture, which, directed to no ideal aim, shares the same vulgar and illusory character. The problem of religion in all ages has been how to deal with this earthy creature, how to renew his will, to make him over again. The greatest agency for this purpose has been the Christian Church, which, however, like all temporal institutions, has itself been washed by the same wave of evil which nearly submerges man. As every institution tends to harden and crystallise, and so to lose its germinal force and inspiration, it has been necessary at different epochs to attempt for mankind from the outside of the Church what the Church itself is failing to do. Emerson found the Church (by which is meant not one particular body or sect, but the organised religious system of Christendom) no better than the society outside it, having lost its power and purity, having surrendered its claims to lead the intellect of the world



or to rally its moral energies, unable of itself to make any new move. It was not he alone who made this discovery. It was made in Germany, in France, in England, all over the world. Carlyle found the Church, as he said, "speechless with apoplexy," Lamennais found it a mere creature of the secular order, Mazzini found it opposed to all the ideals and hopes which animated the best men; the world's moral leaders stood outside the Church's pale. Speaking generally, it may be said that two great attempts were made to renew mankind's spiritual life, undermined by the dominant secular activities and by the criticism and analysis of the last century. On the one hand, the reactionists—De Maistre, Newman, the Schlegels—tried to go back to a supposed apostolic order, to an ecclesiastical idea which had been evolved in the bosom of the Church under, as was supposed and believed, divine guidance. Priestly power was once more to govern the insurgent desires of the flesh and of the mind, unquestioned authority, never to be criticised, was again to hold sway over the masses of Christendom. This reactionary movement, as we know, has assumed great dimensions, and it is an undeniable force in the world to-day. The superficial eighteenth-century *aufklärung* cannot stand before it. Had we to choose between that sceptical analysis which would make of man a mere "forked radish with a head fantastically carved" and the old historic order of Europe, we should not be long in making up our minds; for it is plain that man cannot live by mere analysis, that society will not hold together under its withering blast.

But was there not another way? The aim of German philosophy was to reconstitute the spiritual order, not by going back to miracle and authority, but by discovering, and telling us, as Wordsworth says, no more than what we really are. The German movement towards rational spiritual reconstruction was pushed in England by Carlyle, in America by Emerson. Here, however, we must be careful to distinguish.

I do not mean that the work of either Carlyle or Emerson was a mere copy of what had been done in Germany. In many important ways each of these great writers was original through and through, and there are many inferences deduced from the German idealist philosophy most distasteful to Emerson at least. Nor do I agree with those who are always bracketing Emerson and Carlyle together. The basic nature of each man was entirely different. The Berserkir blood of the wonderful son of the Scottish stonemason is of unlike nature to that refined fluid which flowed passively through the veins of the gentle descendant of several generations of New England Puritan divines. The differing environment of English and American life also counts for not a little. Carlyle lived an unhappy life in a great city seething with wretchedness and social disorder. Emerson lived in the main a simple and happy life in a dreamy country town. But the contrast strikes deeper. Carlyle had but an imperfect grip on the Unseen, his scepticism is perpetually clashing with his faith. We know that Emerson saw and appreciated the sceptical side of the intellect—his Essay on Montaigne alone shows that. But the fountains of his inner life were so deep, so secluded, that they never became turbid by the defilement of sense and outward things. Emerson's own happy nature, his almost flawless moral structure, his republican instincts and environment, all render him a more ideal interpreter of the new yet old doctrine of the Soul and its true life than either Carlyle or the thinkers of Germany.

Now, having "placed" Emerson, having seen his aim—no less than the revival of the moral life and the harmonising of the sundered nature of man—and having understood that the bondage of the Church to convention and its refusal to permit the one unquestioned outcome of the period of *aufklärung*—free criticism—compelled him to sever his connexion with ordinary institutional religion, let us come closer to his actual doctrines so far as we can gather or deduce

them from writings which are so often brilliant facets or shining points of light, or, as Mr. Howells has said, puzzles "all constructed of gold and ivory and precious stones." His central doctrine is, to use his own words, "Soul, Soul, and evermore Soul." The world which we see is penetrated for him with spiritual being, or, as he calls it, with Soul. The whole seeming solid fabric which appeals to the vulgar senses is in itself nothing. Emerson does not trouble himself with the old philosophic problem as to whether there is an external world, though he does not doubt it, but he thinks that the great concern for us is to discover the internal and unseen world of Soul, and to obey gladly its laws. Whether Orion really exists or some god painted it as an image on my soul is to him of no consequence. Suffice it that Orion exists in and for the Soul. What does Emerson mean by the Soul? This is his root idea, so we must get into our minds clearly his thought on this matter. It is not your or my individual soul, intellect, or will, of which he writes. Let that be understood. The Soul is with him a universal spiritual life in which we all share. As mere individuals we partake of the limitations of natural phenomena, we are mere creatures of the secular order, we are born with no will or effort of our own, we struggle, we decline and die. If our soul or mind is nothing but a mere product of this ever ebbing and flowing sea of phenomena, a ripple on the surface, a falling leaf from the great tree of existence, then there is no meaning in Emerson's doctrine of Soul. Each individual soul must, in that case, play its part in a world of jarring atoms in everlasting conflict. We shall act by instinct, by experience, or by calculation of the balance of pleasure and of pain. In the Western world where the Eastern quietism is all but unknown, each will contrive to play its part by putting forth the "will to live" by which the organism most fitted to survive in the conflict will elbow out of the way the organism which is less fitted, the fitness being not moral or spiritual, but

purely material, the adaptation to the world's rough environment. The cosmic process having, so far as we know or can imagine, no personal ends, no ends of reason apart from a rational Spirit who presides over its destinies, the world as a whole has no interest for us save as speculative thinkers, and we shall, each of us, pursue his own ends without any real reference to universal ends. We may perhaps profess a conventional religion, but it will have no meaning for us as we are unrelated atoms. Self-interest will be our one clue through the maze of existence.

This is the life of the average sensual man, and the doctrine behind it is one as old as the history of Western thought. As hedonism it is the prevailing creed of the typical man of affairs, and it has been consecrated by not a few eminent names in the history of human thought. This, however, is not Emerson's meaning when he speaks of the Soul. His Soul is the Universal Soul, the Eternal Spirit that men have named God. That Soul stands in living relation to our personality, its life overflows into our own. Or rather, it is our life, and without it we have no real life at all. We may nourish "a dull life within the brain," but we in no way partake of true life, of life which is in its nature eternal. Apart from the World-Soul, the very world is not, everything is but the "baseless fabric of a vision." We are organs of that Soul, and we only live in so far as we are. The Soul is not, however, the Oriental Soul of the World, mere negativity, concerning which no predicate can be made, simple Being without positive content, but it is supreme Will, Reason, Love. It is conscious, not unconscious, it includes personality, however we are compelled, from the point of view of philosophy, to think of or analyse it as impersonal; it is not a pure transparency but an ever-living Power. It is a Power making for righteousness, but it knows if we obey its laws. It works over our heads, indeed, but it also works in and through us, whether we resist or co-operate. It makes all the difference to us whether we



work for rational and universal ends, but no difference to the Soul whose will shall be in any event fulfilled. Here is no doctrine of absolute Pantheism, though Emerson, like Wordsworth, like all poetic minds, often uses or seems to use the language of Pantheism, no worship of mere substance. Emerson enjoins sympathetic co-operation with a living, pure, rational purpose, and he may be said to find in that co-operation the whole duty of man—no, not duty so much as bent, tendency, inevitable inner purpose.

It is in the light of this doctrine of Soul that we must interpret the so-called Individualism of Emerson about which so much has been written. The word may easily be misleading, for Emerson's idea is by no means that of pure atomism, which was the basis of the individualism of the last century. In Emerson's eyes the individual is an organ of the Universal Spirit, and, indeed, so far from his thought being entirely individualistic, he often uses language which might lead us to suppose that he conceived the individual as nothing, the Spirit working through him as everything. He is not, we must again recollect, consistent or systematic, we must not expect to find smooth sailing through these cross currents of thought. Spirit is seen by him as both acting over the heads of men as in the "Over-Soul," in what may be called a transcendental way, and as acting through man, in what may be called an immanent way. The individual of Emerson, it is true, relies on his instincts, on his central self, and he brings the world to his side. Institutions are, he says, but the prolonged shadows of some great man, quite in the vein of Carlyle in his "Hero Worship." But the great man is no unrelated wonder, no *deus ex machina*, but an incarnation of the Divine: the mind that built the world is in him, he reveals that mind to those who, like the apostle Philip, want to see the Divine. Consequently, if we are to say that Emerson is an Individualist, and that his ethics, as taught, *e.g.*, in the essay on "Self-Reliance," is ethical individualism; if we are to quote his

writings as lending support to a kind of intellectual and spiritual anarchism, to a gospel of the "dissidence of dissent"; we must be careful to make the important reservation that, behind and through the self-governing individual of Emerson, is the Universal Spirit to which each man is related. With the kind of Individualism taught by materialistic hedonism Emerson has no sort of contact whatever.

How do we know the being of the Universal Spirit, and how do we relate ourselves to the Divine? By obedience to moral law, to the law of reason and conscience, which, however we acquired it, is the first fact of real import to us. There is a new mysticism said by some of its admiring critics to be related to Emerson, which teaches that emancipation from morals is the world's great need at present. This mysticism, however, can have no relation to Emerson, for he sets before us always what he has called in a very striking essay, the "Sovereignty of Ethics." He even takes an exaggerated view of morality by making, *e.g.*, Christianity consist of ethics, of men's relations to one another; whereas the Founder of Christianity and its first teachers made of it primarily a gospel of man's relations to the Universal, of which ethics may be taken as a kind of by-product. Faith, hope, and love first—rules for the conduct of life second; such, one would say, was the central idea of Christianity. Emerson can never rightly be looked on as a pure mystic just because of the urgent stress he lays on conduct, being herein at one with Matthew Arnold. It is, indeed, by right conduct, according to Emerson, that we come to true insight; not by contemplating our navels, like the Oriental, but by a healthy human life. Live straight, and you will think true, he seems to say. He always thinks of scepticism as to the reality of ultimate goodness as intimately associated with badness or frivolity of life. The evil soul loses what it knew, while he who has clean hands and a pure heart gains in knowledge of the Divine every day. Our first duty, then, is to

make the law of the world our own law, so that we feel we are co-operating with an irresistible and universal tendency towards supreme and perfect good. From that basis our education proceeds; as we do more we find that we know more.

The Soul, then, expresses itself through man, in genius and character, and over man's head in the impulse given to world-development. We find the doctrine stated in two passages from the essays on "Spiritual Laws" and the "Over-Soul." In the former the writer says: "There is a soul at the centre of nature and over the will of man, so that none of us can wrong the universe. It has so infused its strong enchantment into nature that we prosper when we accept its advice, and when we struggle to wound its creatures our hands are glued to our sides, or they beat our own breasts." Again: "Man is a stream whose source is hidden. Our being is descending into us from we know not whence. The most exact calculator has no prescience that somewhat incalculable may not balk the very next moment. I am constrained every moment to acknowledge a higher origin for events than the will I call mine." I must pause here to meet an argument which may be urged against this view. We may be told that the history of the world does not show that obedience to the Soul causes us to prosper, but that, as the poet says, we see right for ever on the scaffold, wrong for ever on the throne. The objection would come from one who had missed Emerson's whole point, and for whom, therefore, his works were written in vain. To prosper, according to Emerson, is to be more fully inspired by the Soul, not to receive either material or even merely social and intellectual goods. He is very severe on Macaulay, who thinks that Plato's "Good" means good to eat and drink, to wear, to enjoy or cultivate oneself with. The average man (and Macaulay is the average man raised to a higher power) is of the opinion of Job's comforters and of Israel in its early stages of moral development, that flocks and herds are

the dividends paid on a heavy investment in the laws of God. Job knew better, though he could not quite explain his problem. Emerson also knows better, and he can explain it.

To return to the main road from this little bypath. In Emerson's view our co-operation with the Soul is morality, our emotional recognition of the Soul is religion, our intellectual cognition of the Soul is philosophy. Emerson does not ultimately divorce ethics from religion, but he attaches the greatest importance to the first of these relations to the Soul. Perhaps we may say that such a nature as his could not perceive the full value of correct thinking. He saw by flashes of inspiration rather than by logical process. To quote one of his very fine and suggestive poems, he did not ascend to Paradise by the ordinary way, floor above floor, but by the "stairway of surprise." He believed that great thoughts come from the heart. We are not to resist them because we cannot analyse or rationalise them, we must beware of quenching the Spirit. Do not waste time in playing with the doubts of your mind, for while they are constitutive elements in human nature, they are not fundamental or supreme. Emerson appears to think that doubt is due to cessation of the overflow of the Divine into the human mind, as inspiration quits the poet for a time. If we adopt this hypothesis, we must ask why the tide has ebbed, and one's mind is but a stagnant pool. We come with Emerson at times to a kind of fatalism in reply to this question, *i.e.*, to a kind of Augustinian doctrine of grace. The potter fashions one vessel to honour, another to dishonour, though by devious ways all will at some time come right. This is Emerson's so-called Oriental side. But at other times it is hinted that there is an obstruction to the infinite flow in ourselves, there is an obstruction in the human channel, so that free will is maintained. On the whole, I think we may say with certainty that Emerson leans to this side. He is for freedom rather than for fate. He is not ultimately of the Orient.



It has been urged that Emerson, believing that the personal spirit of man is an incarnation of the Spirit of the World, cannot be justly accused of any such ethical individualism as would identify him with the real individualists, the materialist hedonists. The real criticism which may be urged against Emerson from the point of view of his doctrine of Soul, is a lack of allowance for heredity and environment as determining character. Though his thought was evolutionary, and in his early essay on "Nature" and in his poetry he anticipates the general evolutionary attitude of modern thought as clearly as did the post-Kantian thinkers of Germany, yet he did the greater part of his work before the practical deductions from evolutionary doctrine began to be made by men of science and students of sociology. He sees less hope in social co-operation than it is quite permissible to expect. The isolated man cannot, as Mazzini was never tired of saying, relate himself to the Universal save through the institutions of society. It is these institutions, whether political or voluntary, which reveal to man the essentially social nature of his mind. Much as we may admire Thoreau, much as we may esteem the message he had for a generation which is disposed to fritter away its energies in accumulation and adornment, we shall not save our souls alive by living in a wood and eating roots. The great world of history, the templed globe of human civilisation has a meaning for us that we cannot afford to pass by. Emerson has himself stated both sides of the problem (a problem which Ibsen has suggested, but has vainly tried to solve in his social dramas) in his remarkable essay called "The Conservative." You read that essay, and you are a believer alternately in Anarchism and in the Rights of Property, so lucid is the claim made for each side. Emerson's conclusion is that of Epictetus. "It will never make any difference to a hero what the laws are." In a sense that is no doubt true. The hero will be far above the laws, indeed, we may fairly say that a goodly number of

quite unheroic people are able to dispense to-day with laws so far as the conduct of their own lives is concerned. But the laws are the expression of a social life of which they are part, from which they cannot sunder themselves if they would. When it came to the Fugitive Slave law attempted to be put into actual practice on the soil of Massachusetts, we read with rejoicing and emotion that some very palpable heroes agreed that that law made a good deal of difference to them, and that among those heroes was Emerson. We gladly pass over his inconsistency, and quote his practice against his theory.

We need, says Emerson, in that memorable opening of the essay on "Nature," an original relation with the universe instead of that second-hand relation which is our stunted possession to-day. Why should not we feel as did the early Greeks of the heroic age or the Psalmist watching his sheep on the Judæan hills? We never see in vision "the simple shepherd's awe-inspiring god," we analyse, probe, weigh, but we do not worship in gladness or in awe. We cannot hand in an original report, but must always be quoting the seers of an elder world in which we have lost gennine belief. The world is too much with us, the burden of a long stretch of historic tradition presses on us, we are crushed by the weight of institutions and precedent. This is true, but Emerson's insistence on our undoubted loss is a confession of weakness on his social side, it is an undue claim for the self-sustaining individual. For every great experience of man the race has to pay. In the words of the proverb, we cannot eat our cake and have it. The ideas which made of nature a pantheon, which peopled streams and groves with divine presences, "live no longer in the faith of reason," and the World-Spirit has compelled us to take up the burden of complex human intercourse by which alone we can learn certain priceless lessons and work out our freedom. There is no other way. The progress of the race which had at first related itself so closely to Nature demanded in

time a still closer reticulation of human interests and emotions. We are going through that process now, we are learning, to quote Emerson's own words, that all are needed by each one, we are in the humanitarian stage of culture, and, until we have learnt its lesson, we may not renew our old intimacy with nature. When we do we shall not approach nature in the old Pagan way, but in a new spirit, attuned, as Wordsworth hints, to "the still sad music of humanity."

Emerson has worked out his fundamental thought—the all-pervading World-Soul in whose life man shares and whose organ he is—in the two series of *Essays*. He has worked it out in subtle and varied aspects, but always with reference to the guidance of practical life. A few great and simple ideas run all through these two volumes. The essay on "History" shows us that "a man is the whole encyclopædia of facts," and that the epochs of history "are merely the applications of his manifold spirit to the manifold world." The mind is one and nature is its correlative. We gain a clue to the history of mankind through our own mind, which is, it must ever be remembered, the organ of the Infinite Mind. He who sees this and lives in its light "shall be the priest of Pan and bring with him into humble cottages the blessings of the morning stars and all the recorded benefits of heaven and earth." The essay on "Self-Reliance" insists on the validity of man's mortal intuition, as the work of the spirit, and the need of obeying that intuition. "Insist on yourself, never imitate. Your own gift you can present every moment with cumulative force of a whole life's cultivation; but of the adopted talent of another you have only an extemporaneous half possession. That which each can do best, none but his Maker can teach him." The essay on "Compensation" shows our weal or woe as self-caused. Goodness does not breed flocks and herds, but it breeds more goodness and therefore more power. Badness does not bring plagues and earthquakes, but it brings more badness and consequently loss of power. The retribution is not in the outward pain or punish-

ment but in the inward loss of virtue or strength. "You cannot do wrong without suffering wrong." But there is no fatalism here. For virtue is self-propagating also, and "the law holds with equal sureness for all right action. Love, and you shall be loved." "Put God into your debt," and "every stroke shall be repaid." The essay is really an excursus on the old text, "That which a man soweth shall he also reap." Destiny rests not on fate but on character. "Spiritual Laws," one of Emerson's most characteristic essays, enforces the same idea. You cannot dodge or evade the very law of your being; all comes back to the giver and reinforces his real nature. Man is a "selecting principle," he cannot hide himself, his essential character is working every moment, unseen it may be to himself or others, but it is there, building up his personality and making for him a heaven or hell. Men should accept their own affinities and work on the lines of their own genius. We do not render ourselves valuable by fuss and self-advertisement, but by becoming valuable, which is our sign or advertisement to the universe. In the essay on "Love" that deep feeling is ultimately viewed as merely an education by which we "are put in training for a love which knows not sex, nor person, nor partiality, but which seeks virtue and wisdom everywhere, to the end of increasing virtue and wisdom." The treatment of "Friendship" is very delicate and subtle. Emerson soon penetrates the outer wrappings to the inner fact of friendship as the expression of a spiritual law. Friendship is born of soul-life, friends are self-elected, the relation involves a certain mutual self respect. We must not intrude too much on our friend, we must respect his spiritual personality and our own self-development. The respect for the soul in me must forbid mere idolatry, I cannot afford to lose my vision in a too-insistent respect for my friend's. The essay on "Prudence" regards that quality as "the virtue of the senses" or the "outmost action of the inward life." Such an essay as this relieves Emerson from the charge



of being so wholly absorbed in ideas as to lose sight of the material facts all around him. "Heroism" notes such a full possession of man by the Soul that he "affirms his ability to cope single-handed with the infinite army of enemies." Heroism does not reason, it feels, it is a primal quality of the soul, it is what the Romans knew as "virtus," which was not a physical quality that afterwards became moralised, but it was always moral and always physical, cohering in its double expression. Heroism so kindles the flame of enthusiasm among men that "a great man makes his climate genial to the imagination of men and its air the beloved element of all delicate spirits." The Over-Soul," which, in my judgment, is the most characteristic of Emerson's writings, affirms the being and action of the Infinite Power over us who uses us, who treads softly, like the ancient goddess, over the heads of men. It is not for us to wrestle with that Power, like the fierce moralising Jews, but to become fully receptive, to draw in its life with our every breath. "I, the imperfect, adore my own Perfect, I am somehow receptive of the great soul, and thereby I do overlook the sun and the stars and feel them to be the fair accidents and effects which change and pass. More and more the surges of everlasting nature enter into me, and I become public and human in my regards and actions. So come I to live in thoughts and act with energies which are immortal." The willing subject of the Over-Soul "will weave no longer a spotted life of shreds and patches, but he will have a divine unity." The essay on "Circles" sees the universe as fluid, permeable to spiritual power. Human life is a series of evolving circles, there is no limit. We feel a sense of liberation, of expansion, on reading this very fine study. We feel that the accepted principle of to-day which seems to explain nature will itself be included in a greater generalisation to-morrow, nature will unfold itself with the expansion of the mind, and the mind will grow with the expansion of nature. In this essay Emerson, in meeting the charge

of Pyrrhonism which may be urged against him, concedes that, from the standpoint of intellect, he must confess evil to be a fact of no importance or to be justified as a necessary part of the whole. The essay on "Intellect" declares for mental spontaneity: "God enters by a private door into every individual." Each man is called, so to speak, to be his own philosopher. But integrity in every work is needed; the oracle will yield no response till we have laid siege to the shrine. "Art" is treated as creative, as ever new, as the spirit that accepts the fact of the hour as one expression of that eternal interest and beauty which the soul finds in the world. The age of production is not over, it will renew itself wherever there is courage. "It will come, as always, unannounced, and spring up between the feet of brave and earnest men." Science is not to absorb us wholly.

The second series commences with the essay on "The Poet." Here we find that the world, convention, routine, over-civilisation, respectable success are conceived as the barriers to poetic production. The poet shall "leave the world, and know the muse only." He shall "abdicate a manifold and duplex life," and shall lie hid with nature. His reward is that the ideal shall be real to him. His heart shall dance with the dancing daffodils, it shall dilate and conspire with the morning wind, it shall glow with the colour of departing sunsets, it shall partake of the wonderful mystery of the sea. No condition shall be to him inopportune or ignoble. The most subtle of Emerson's essays is that on "Experience." It is impossible to give any effective analysis of this wonderful piece of writing. It is destructive of banal materialism, a word of hope to all strong souls. Temperament is final on its own level, but there is another level on which our true life flows. On the level of physical necessity "one lives in a sty of sensualism," and would soon come to suicide. But it is impossible that the creative power should exclude itself. Into every intelligence there is a door which is never closed, through which

the Creator passes. "Let us act as if the fatalistic influences of environment were not. Let us abandon convention and statistics and catchwords, and live in the light of to-day." "Five minutes of to-day are worth as much to me as five minutes in the next millennium. Let us be poised, and wise, and our own, to-day. Let us treat the men and women well; treat them as if they were real; perhaps they are." Life is a series of surprises, its results incalculable, let us keep up the game with serious interest, with all our energies. Let us accept the leading of the sentiments, let us recognise that the ultimate cause is infinite enough to include our scepticisms as well as our beliefs, and to return to us transformed and renewed as the outcropping of the experience of those acts and thoughts and wishes we have willed and done. "Never mind the ridicule, never mind the defeat: up again, old heart!—it seems to say,—there is victory yet for all justice; and the true romance which the world exists to realise will be the transformation of genius into practical power." How different is the essay on "Character" from the jejune platitudes usually talked on that theme! Character is the manners of the soul. You will not attain it by following copybook maxims, but by acting your own real part. Character is the moral order seen through an individual nature, tinged with the native manners of an individual soul. It is seen in power, in the resistance of mere circumstances. The possession of great character does not mean namby-pamby faultlessness, it is compatible with what we call evil. The essential point is that the man of character must see "that the event is ancillary; it must follow him." Character quakes at nothing, stands upright on its own feet, lives for the future, and generally proposes to serve men by other means than soup-kitchens and flabby benevolence. It is not lawless, but it knows where its allegiance is due, and it will not suffer that others should dictate that allegiance or fix the terms of its circuit. To the subject of "Manners" as embodying an aspect of the art of life, Emerson attached

great importance. Substantially his judgment may be stated in one sentence from the essay: "A circle of men perfectly well-bred would be a company of sensible persons in which every man's native manners and character appeared." Ever the same word of insight, so well expressed in that line of Browning, "best be yourself, imperial, plain, and true." The short essay on "Gifts" tells us that the real gift of our friend is his love, and when that ceases, let the gift also cease. Indeed, it will cease, for "we cannot be bought and sold." The survey of "Nature" is a clear *aperçu* into nature's cheating illusion. There is, says Emerson, "throughout nature something mocking, something that leads us on and on, but arrives nowhere; keeps no faith with us. All promise outruns the performance. We live in a system of approximations. Every end is prospective of some other end, which is also temporary; a round and final success nowhere." But from this view comes no doctrine of despair or death; of growth, rather, of evolution. "The divine circulations never rest nor linger." We have cycles to pass through, in which we shall gain our larger experience of the possibilities of nature. In "Politics" Emerson works out his fundamental idea of the Soul into the institutions of the State. Incidentally he replies to the ignorant and superficial criticism often passed in Europe on the American Republic, but the essay is generally an attempt to set forth a basis of politics. Essentially it consists of a great distrust of the machinery of government, and a preaching of the idealist doctrine of no government, or the real stress for political reform laid on the soul rather than on laws and ordinances. The State, too, will follow the laws of the mind, her statutes embody what was once a private thought. You think you can get the people to vote prosperity or to abolish crime, but "the wise know that foolish legislation is a rope of sand which perishes in the twisting; that the State must follow and not lead the character and progress of the citizen; the strongest usurper is quickly got rid of; and they only who build on Ideas build for



eternity; and that the form of government which prevails is the expression of what cultivation exists in the population which permits it. We are told that "every actual state is corrupt," and that the purpose of the State is educational—the production of the wise man with whose advent the elaborate political order expires. The last essay bears the title of "Nominalist and Realist," recalling the old mediæval controversy. This essay reminds us of the infinite deal of nonsense written in our time in defence of what some are pleased to call realism. To these persons the real is that which they can immediately touch and see. To Hegel, on the other hand, the real was the rational and the rational was the real. This is Emerson's idea, and he devotes the essay to a consideration of what is fleeting and what is real in humanity and the world-process. The young admire, he says, talents or particular excellencies, but the wiser care for "total powers and effects, as the impression, the quality, the spirit of men and things." Persons melt so fast into each other that they are like grass and trees. But, on the other hand, nature will not allow you to get rid of parts, it is not her intention that we should live by general views. We must have universals, but we shall attain them, not by denial of the parts, but by co-ordinating them into one great and ever-living and growing synthesis.

Such is a very brief and insufficient abstract of the two series of the *Essays*. I am painfully aware of the fact that this compendium sounds flat and bald when set alongside the fascinating pages of the essayist, for one cannot reproduce the inimitable grace and subtlety of thought of Emerson's writings. But it will serve to show how Emerson carried a few central ideas (if, indeed, we may not say one central idea—the doctrine of the Soul) into his survey of the various aspects of life. His general end is, I think, clear. He calls us from a life of convention and routine to the heights of human excellence. He demands freedom for the highest and most worthy ends. He will have us renounce the world that we may gain ourselves. He sees that

the present condition of the world is due to the entanglement of the soul by machinery, that we have been caught in the whirl of an all-devouring materialism which has rendered life sordid, mean, joyless, commonplace, so that we may starve in the midst of our piled-up luxuries, we die in the midst of plenty. "The politics," he says, "are base, the letters do not cheer." We have to go back in history to find inspiration, to discover models of virtue, of fine living, of sincere thought. But he does not rail at modern life, as is the way of the pessimist, for he thinks this materialism is a necessary part of a great process of evolution. The question for him is, how shall we use this modern civilisation, to what ends shall the immense reservoirs of material power be directed? At present we are like barbarians in some magnificent palace, who make use of the ornaments and the costly furniture to cook their dinners. Consider what great ends might be served by the new powers gained over nature, what messages of beneficence to mankind might be conveyed. But science is to-day harnessed to the car of murder, the mechanical genius of the world is at this moment chiefly engaged in devising implements of slaughter; with machinery which runs beyond the fabled wonders of antiquity, and which can produce more wealth in a day than was formerly produced in a century, men are ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-lodged, and the mass of them find a dreary life of uninteresting and ill-paid toil their destined lot. We seem to labour with infinite fatigue and to arrive nowhere. In the higher ranges of life, too, we produce no superb types of character, genius is dying out and is replaced by a superficial smartness, which is the note of most of that current writing which we are still fain to call literature. None of the great eras of the world has so soon grown prematurely grey as ours. Emerson tries to rouse us from the body of this death.

There are two ways of meeting our modern disease, the outward and the inward methods. We may consider man as a phenomenon determined by heredity and

environment, or we may regard him as fundamentally a free and spiritual nature. The former is the predominant view of the present moment. Alike in sociology, industry, and psychology man is treated as a body, not as a soul. His life is to be so organised, so drilled, so machined, that a kind of automatic rectitude will obtain. Persons are not to be ends in themselves, but pins and wheels in some huge leviathan of social machinery. Art and religion are to be replaced by solicitude for drains and magazine rifles. We are to answer the question of Hamlet by frankly admitting that man *is* a pipe to be played on; and that modern portent, the scientific expert, is to play on him. Life is, in short, to be organised on a purely naturalistic and scientific basis. The race has, we are told, spent too much time on dreaming, and must now address itself to the real, by which is meant the actual objects of scientific analysis. Darwinism is supposed to have scientifically demonstrated the fact of determinism, and man's freedom is treated as a pleasing illusion. The bacteriologist is to be our doctor of divinity, and the engineer our evangelist.

As we have seen, Emerson never shirked the facts, the terrible facts, of our physical life. He admitted heredity, environment, he was at an early time deeply interested in every project of social reform. He studied with sympathy the wave of Fourierism which swept over America half a century ago, and which bore on its crest so many noble and intelligent minds. He was no mere quietist; he always voted, we are told, and advised his friends to do the like. He believed in citizenship, and in his last public utterance, that on the "Fortunes of the Republic," he once more declared his abiding faith in the future of the United States. He denied no side of life, not even its so-called evil, which, he says, seen from the point of view of the world-order, may be very different from what it seems in the Sunday school or the cloister. But Emerson did not believe in machinery, he believed in soul. He does not deny the task of the expert whose ideal is a



well-groomed public order, but he did emphatically deny that that was the world's great need. "Soul, Soul, evermore Soul,"—that is his message to his time. What shall we say of this purely spiritual, seemingly dreamy and unpracticable voice from the quiet groves of Concord? Has it any meaning for us, or is it mere transcendental moonshine?

If I held the Philistine view that the appeal to rally the forces of man's spiritual nature as a solution of the social problem was mere moonshine, if I were one of the countless victims of the delusion that man's real ailment was material, this essay would never have been written. Yet I have to admit that Emerson's gospel is a partial one. He confessed that he was not interested in the masses, but that his object was to select from the masses. His writings, therefore, must be taken as addressed to the few, as were the writings of Milton, of Wordsworth, of Browning. There is a noble aristocracy of quality in Emerson. He does not address mere culture any more than the vulgar mass: he addresses the select souls, through whose mediate influence his own rare thought will in time penetrate the dense mass of coarser clay of which the world is mainly composed. Men who pass one another in the streets every day may, spiritually, be sundered by centuries. In this man the ape and tiger are still very manifest; but close by him passes one whom St. Francis would have hailed as brother. Emerson does not write for the mass, but for those in the higher stages of intellectual and moral evolution. Though I do not accept the basis of utilitarianism, I see very clearly that, for the rough and superficial work of the ordinary reformer, utilitarianism is a useful provisional hypothesis. To look after the drains and the common schools, to check adulteration and to invent engines, is all excellent work, but it does not exhaust human life, nor does it answer one of life's most persistent problems. Emerson fully appreciated Benthamism and the philosophy of poor Richard, but he found plenty of others who did too, and he set out for himself



a task not quite so obvious in its utility, and yet which, in his judgment, afforded the sole basis on which even a successful utility-gospel could finally justify itself to mankind. What, then, is the texture of the body of doctrine given by Emerson to his time? How, too, does he seize and solve the problems of the modern sphinx?

Let us first take the concrete problems of discussion to which Emerson's central ideas relate themselves. The fundamental struggle of our closing century and of that just opening up before us concerns itself with property, with the accumulation and distribution of material wealth. The various solutions pressed upon us are well known; no need to repeat them here. Emerson rejects them all as solutions of the problem. He is neither for the so-called rights of property nor for compulsory distribution or collective ownership. He simply takes us to a higher point of view. If we cannot live well in the institution of property, can we live well out of it? The old desire is still there—the desire to accumulate; the old vice is still there—the vice of a belief that “the good” is material good. Men are no more brothers because a mechanical device has been discovered—a kind of gigantic “penny-in-the-slot” machine—for the mere mechanical expression of a non-existent moral fact. Every one still desires to appropriate, and probably the clever ones, as in the past, will succeed, as no machinery known or likely to be discovered will redistribute human brains. Without goodwill social Utopias are vain; and what is goodwill but the manners of the soul?

What shall be our attitude towards institutions? Are we for the omnipotent State or for federated communes? Are we collectivist or anarchist? Emerson again takes us to a higher plane. Like Whitman, he may fairly say that he is neither for or against institutions. We have seen that his own leaning was to very little government, and his writings are often, as a result, blasphemously taken in vain by the self-constituted defenders of “liberty” and “property,” as

they call themselves. It is like quoting Paul in favour of slavery. Emerson would have been the first to repudiate such disciples. He, like Arnold, is for force till right is ready, but he would so stimulate to active and powerful goodness that germ of right which is still so feeble among men, that each day its unseen influence will sow the soil of society with braver and greater deeds. If this spirit grows, coercion will become needless. In any case, it will not be a bad thing to find public men actuated by noble motives and zeal for good works. They are not conspicuous in that respect now. Even if the colossal machinery of the State is still to prove our salvation, it will be all the better if that machinery is directed by men of goodwill. Is not that indeed precisely the crying need of Emerson's own Republic at this very hour?

The world at present, especially our part of it, is eaten up with militarism, aflame with military ardour, deep in appliances for human destruction. Never in human history were such gigantic preparations for war made, never were suggestions of peace and disarmament so scouted as now in so-called Christian Europe. Nation watches nation as a policeman watches a suspicious vagabond. The intention of piracy is assumed as a matter of course. The real end is the defence of material interests which are supposed to have been transmuted into rights. What can such a gentle idealist as Emerson, with his doctrine of the Soul, have to say to the eager rout of warriors, capitalists, and emperors who are scrambling for the riches of the globe? As well offer a pouncet-box for the pestilence, it may be thought. Yet in his essay on "War"—the best word that has ever been uttered on the question—Emerson does contrive to say the needed truth. "Fear, lust, and avarice cannot make a State," he tells us in the lines prefixed to "Politics," and the essay is an expansion of that idea. He fully admits all which can be said for war, its need in the early history of the race, its inevitableness, its breeding of virtues in whose absence man

would have gone under in the contest with nature. You begin to think that it was better to be Alexander than Diogenes, but the evolution of society is traced out, and we find that the needs of the race no longer demand this terrible surgery. We have learned all that war can teach us, and it is time we cast it behind us as the brutal thing it has become. The Soul is now to be served in other ways than these. The nation which can embody the highest ideals of justice, he says, will not be defenceless even though she could not fire a gun in her defence or put forth a ship of war on the seas. She will have the feelings, the interests, the good wishes of humanity on her side; she will find that, after all, right and justice weigh heavier in the destinies than armour-plating and machine guns. Let those who set material gains first and the service of the Soul second or nowhere, carry out their designs; they will be mocked with surfeit, swollen with corruption. Even such a sensual man of the world as Napoleon saw that big empires commonly perish of indigestion.

The growing dishonesty of trade vexes the mind of the honest citizen. But our trade is as corrupt as our politics, our diplomacy, perhaps our popular pulpit and our professor's chair, and no more. "The wave of evil washes all our institutions." You legislate against adulteration, against fraudulent bankruptcy, against the dishonest importer, only to find the old fraud cropping up in new and more subtle forms. If man can be made to realise his true nature and see that by every act of wrong he is doing as real injury to himself as though he were to thrust his hand into the fire, you get to the root of the evil as you never can by any other way. Men pretend to believe in cause and effect, but the trouble is they do not. In some way they think they will be able to dodge the moral law. It is the dream of a fool. Let the wholeness or health of man's life be restored, and trade will become, what it should be, the conferring of mutual material services.



It is, therefore, as Whitman says, "Yourself, yourself, always yourself," which is Emerson's central idea; your own care and culture, your own courage, your own inward sincerity, your own integrity of intellect. The world is in perpetual conspiracy to rob us of our one jewel, to reduce us to the coarse and vulgar level of contented ease, to its own poor superstition of "having" as a substitute for "being." That is the one unpardonable sin, according to Emerson, that we should act as though the soul could really possess anything save its own inherent and rooted excellence. Even our virtues partake of this sin of sins. We hug our little moralities, we fuss and fume about our philanthropic activities, we advertise abroad our threadbare spiritual goods. We conceive of immortality as merely a prolongation of the power of personal accumulation, as a gathering in of heavenly dividends. Spiritual life to us, as Emerson puts it, is matter "O so thin!" instead of "that which is its own evidence," that which has a manifest sovereign right to be amid all the crumbling fragments of this dream of life. To partake of that true life should be the one aim of man. As was said of old, if we really do seek first the kingdom of righteousness, other things will come to us in the course of nature. Do we believe it? Scarcely at present. The main object of Emerson's efforts is to persuade us that this fact of the intellect is true. What greater service could be rendered to us? Who can better deserve the title of prophet than he who renders it, and who performs his appointed task in such a delicate and suggestive way, in a manner and style so unique, so steeped in gracious wisdom?

But the self is no isolated unit, fighting a forlorn hope, not certain of any real issue, save in its own inward satisfaction. That was the kind of battle fought by the Stoics, whose outlines we trace in the "Meditations" of Marcus Aurelius, noblest, perhaps, of all the legacies of the antique world. "It were well to die if there be Gods, and sad to live if there be



none." That was the highest affirmation which Stoicism in its finest figure could make. It was the final melancholy testament of the religious consciousness of the Pagan world. Stoicism was the religious, or rather moral, individualism which is inaccurately ascribed to Emerson. Individualism is the first and last word of those who have no universal and unifying spiritual life in whom we all live. Emerson would be for us nothing more than a very interesting and beautiful humanitarian did he discern nothing more than the individual soul, its duties and aspirations. All very well, we should say, but what if all the tremendous forces of the universe went towards cancelling those duties and aspirations? What, in that case, is their ultimate validity and sanction? The sole possible answer is that there is none; that duties and aspirations are but matters of taste. You have them, I have not: what is to convince me that you are right? If the universe is nothing but a number of unrelated units, you will go your way, I shall go mine, and I will thank you not to worry me about my duty, a term which may have no meaning to me, and which, in your mouth as a piece of advice to me, is nothing but impertinence. Schopenhauer has torn in pieces this flimsy though fair robe of mere humanitarianism, and no strong mind, determined not to be duped, is likely to try to put the fragments together again. The individual self is to Emerson of reality and of value as the incarnation of the universal self. "The inviolate soul is in perpetual telegraphic communication with the source of events." Our self-respect is, he says, "our practical perception of the Deity in man. It has its deep foundations in religion." If, again, it is asked how this fact beyond sense is known, if one is reminded that to many the fact is not known or is denied, Emerson's answer is that the soul, if "inviolate," learns this knowledge as the understanding learns the facts of chemistry, that the world becomes "an open secret to the soul." The soul and its Maker are one; the stream of life is unbroken.

"A healthy soul stands united with the Just and the True, as the magnet arranges itself with the pole." The experience which follows from the integrity of the intellect and the persistent attempt to be our real selves, to have done with shams, to make of our lives, as Milton said, 'a poem, is the one argument which does not fail. "Logic and sermons do not convince," but life does.

A prophet is too often assumed to be the weird messenger of doom. A Jonah shrieking in the streets of Nineveh, an Elijah calling down fire from heaven—this is the type of prophet most familiar to the sermonizing English, with their perpetual tendency to Hebraise, as to ancient Israel. But we need the sane and joyous prophet also, tender as a green sapling, bright as winter starlight, one who shall not strive nor cry, but who shall steal into our souls like the dawn of a summer day. Especially do we English-speaking people, with our everlasting banalities, our sensationalism, our slow intellect and strong will, need such a prophet of wholesomeness and sanity. It is Emerson's distinction that he is eminently sane. Carlyle came in sackcloth and ashes, and doubtless we needed that too. But Emerson comes clad in the robes of spring, and his presence brings health and inspiration. Carlyle made us feel how bad we were, Emerson how good we might be. Both orders of the prophets have a valid claim to be heard, but Emerson is to us in our present mood more useful, as he is rarer, than Carlyle. We may be thankful enough for two such voices in our complex time. Emerson not only spends little energy in railing at the bad, but he also sifts things so as to give us the best. The best of the old Paganism, the best of Christianity, the best of science and literature. His judgments are not invariably to be relied on, but even his few errors are bottomed in some vital truth. He could not in the nature of things have escaped from the limitations of his early environment, but those very limitations helped him, rendered his lines severe, his strokes firm, imparted to

him concentrated power. His character was of the finest and noblest, and it was well said of him by an admirer that, if he went to hell, the Devil would not know what to do with him. Few souls will have so swift and easy an ascent into Paradise. But in truth he lived habitually in paradise; its expression was on his countenance. I can see him now as I saw him in the flesh at that Concord home, which, next to Independence Hall, is America's chief shrine. He had talked of George Eliot, of the moral gloom and the austere unbelief which weighed down her fine spirit. He had read *Adam Bede* alone of all her works; he wanted to read no more. "She has no solution," he said. And, having delivered this judgment, he spoke to me of Scott in terms of the deepest affection. "He is healthy, he is objective, he is friendly, human, and hopeful." I say nothing of the mere literary judgment, but, in characterising Scott, Emerson drew his own portraiture. He was the bringer of glad tidings of great joy, he was the prophet to our age of faith in the Soul and hope as to the destinies of man.

WILLIAM CLARKE, M.A.

## Alfred Tennyson

THE laureate has not always been the poet of the people, and it must be admitted that the laureateship is not an easy profession. Since the struggle with Napoleon came to an end, there has been a period of comparative peace. There has not been that range in current history for stirring ballads as in earlier epochs. But a national poet celebrating the deeds of Crown and people from year to year, might indeed have found subjects revolutionary enough to quicken into song: the vast growth of Empire; the penetration of continents; the knitting together of island to island with bands woven out of vapour and lightning; the marvellous building of cities; the discovery of gold; the alchemy of chemistry; the march of scientific thought. Had our Tennyson possessed the shrewd wit, the photographic fidelity, and that idealism of the common-place, which were characteristic of Chaucer, we should have had idylls of a different sort indeed. Yet how infrequently does the age have a poet of its own time! In writing this, one almost hesitates, remembering that Mr. Rudyard Kipling is still young, and may go far; but as a general statement it holds good. The discovery of the New World is still waiting for its poet. Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton,—all are mute in the face of that great morning. Shakespeare, indeed, writes historically near to his own age; but Milton discarded the present for an infinite past, and carried the spirit of the Renaissance into the very courts of Heaven. There is no doubt a difficulty in idealizing the familiar. Thrust upon a pyramid, we see nothing but broken stone ledges and empty picnic-



bottles. To idealize, we must fall back in order that the picture may compose well. Time is required for that—time to soften the ragged edges of realism with the haze of mystery; to lose the details in broad lines and colours; to put into the mouths of the actors the words they ought to have said at the crises of history, and did not. So we find Tennyson pushing through the perukes and patches of the eighteenth century; gathering no story in the stern Puritan struggle of the seventeenth; disdaining the wearisome contests of the Nobles during the time of the Roses; refusing the mighty epic of the Crusades, and seeking the figures for his greatest poem in the warm twilight of Arthurian romance. Here he can mould history to his purpose, and in the ancient British kingdom—or probably confederacy of kinglets, who made a bold but hopeless stand against the northern heathen—he finds his “flower of Kings,” whom, as in the steaming mist beneath the nunnery walls, he distorts into proportions altogether gigantic and beyond the meagre tradition which has reached us. Here he sketches noble figures, knight and maiden, quest of chivalry for wrong to be righted, and hearts aflame for the mystic Holy Grail. Here the poet deals with modern problems of charities and chastities in his perfect setting; but the music is far away—it dies at last in echoes and faint gleams of light along the shores of fabled Lyonesse. It would not be true to say that Tennyson has not written passages throbbing with modern life, but these are to be found in his shorter pieces.

Dealing with his lyrical muse later on, we have to consider the literary influences which played upon his mind and grew into its fibre. The classical school of the Renaissance lasted little beyond Dryden and Pope; the public,—tired with a style which was dying in affectations, and whose Greek and Roman divinities had long since forgotten their native woodlands and waterfalls, and had become the stone gods of the museum,—went out cheerfully with Cowper for his winter’s walk, and were even resigned to come home

with him, sit on his sofa, and listen to the muse of his tea-urn. Byron in his audacious moods had played havoc with the conventional school; it was Keats who re-discovered sensuous paganism asleep in its dreamy groves; and Wordsworth who went to the very source and inspiration of pagan poetry, tempting the gods and goddesses to discover themselves once more in the woodland beauties of his own Lake Country. The heavy richness of Keats creeps here and there into Tennyson's verse; the lilt and music of Shelley are heard in some of his shorter pieces. But Wordsworth probably has the most abiding influence on his work. Nature and humanity are the two necessary constituents of all poetry. Wordsworth is ever trying to personify nature. He invests the tree, the waterfall, the flowers by the lake, with human qualities. It is the true pagan spirit, the religion of naturalism. At any moment he seems prepared to become "a pagan suckled in a creed outworn"; his eyes "have sight of Proteus rising from the Sea"; he hears "old Triton blow his wreathèd horn." London from Westminster Bridge in the early morning suggests not to him the great tide of human thought and endeavour turning at lowest ebb to flow again in multitudinous energies; it is the natural form—the matter he personifies.

"Dear God! the very houses seem asleep!  
And all that mighty heart is lying still!"

Nature claims his Lucy as her own, and

"Beauty, born of murmuring sound,  
Had passed into her face."

So, when dead, there is no breaking into a higher life of such buoyancy of being.

"No motion has she now, no force,  
She neither hears nor sees—  
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course  
With rocks, and stones, and trees!"

It is the gospel of pure naturalism—present existence, the summary of life; once dead—stone dead.

In the opposite direction we have Browning, to whom Nature was hardly a background. In his dramatic poetry — and his poetry is always dramatic — he hurries his characters on to the stage, and begins the play before the scenes are properly set. A full-blooded, insistent, clashing humanity is all his own. The greatness of Tennyson and the certainty of his fame may be found in the balance maintained throughout his poetry. Vibrating to the tenderest touch of Nature, the vox humana is also heard all through. Paint the picture however daintily he may, there are the woman and the man in the foreground.

Against the quotation from Wordsworth we may set

“Break, break, break, on thy cold gray stones, O sea.

I would that my tongue could utter the thoughts that arise in me.”

And,

“In looking on the happy autumn fields

And thinking of the days that are no more.”

Wordsworth would never have so swiftly translated the phenomena of nature into human feeling. There are, indeed, here and there, in Tennyson, traces of scientific thought and accuracy of expression which mark the influence of the present epoch upon literature.

The developments of our theology during the Tennyson period have affected his work to a greater extent than even the current of public affairs. A man born in the cultured middle-class, cradled in an Anglican home, and steeped in University habit of thought, would hardly have escaped the influence of the Tractarian movement. There is, however, no trace of this in the teaching of Tennyson. The true poet is always a man of broad sympathies, and a faculty of wide impression makes for a liberal mood. On the other hand, the Maurice influence is fairly distinct. Tennyson is dominated by religious thought of an interesting and far-reaching character. He has

not the same breadth of sympathy as Browning, and does not cut loose so completely from his own preference, as to place himself in the mental and moral position of those from whom he deeply differs. This is the Shakespearian characteristic seen to perfection in his brother poet Browning. When the Bishop orders his tomb at St. Praxed's church, we see pagan Christianity "naked and not ashamed," and when we hear Bishop Blougram's apology across the wine and the walnuts, the apologetic tone is almost lost in his reasonable defence of his position. Such dramatic detachment would be impossible to Tennyson; with him the advocate never sinks into the client. His mind is essentially reverent; he breathes the atmosphere of tradition, but he rises and falls on that heaving sea of religious thought which is the feature of the last half of this century, when the fountains of the great deep have been broken up, and historical religion has had to scour for itself new channels. Through this period of storm and change, England has remained not less religious than heretofore. It may be that even the direction given to religious thought has diffused a wider influence and invaded more departments of human life. Tennyson is truly the laureate of this crisis. His questions and heart-searchings go down to the roots of the mountains, and rise into space and air.

The discipline of life threw him back upon himself. Roses came in good time, showers of them, but there was a hard grey beginning,—a road strewn with loose granite. On the threshold of life a great sorrow sobered his enthusiasms, threw him in on himself, and his voice took a pathos which it never lost. There is no great poet who has not striven, at least once in a way, with the naked mysteries of life, who has not looked into the stony eyes of fate to wonder if she alone were the mighty mother of us all. The great void is filled with a fatherhood which is only the echo of our own aspirations; and the long vista of eternity is only a mirage created by human figures



refracted from the veil of obscurity. Poet as he was, he turned instinctively to Nature for the sympathetic expression of divinity, but he falls back repulsed.

"Are God and Nature then at strife,  
That Nature lends such evil dreams,  
So careful of the type she seems,  
So careless of the single life;

"I falter where I firmly trod,  
And falling with my weight of cares  
Upon the great world's altar-stairs  
That slope thro' darkness up to God.

"What hope of answer, or redress?  
Behind the veil, behind the veil."

He is, as all must be, cast back upon the inner consciousness for a testimony; discarding Nature with her unmoral prodigality and her complacent indifference to human love and cares,—

"Out of darkness came the hands  
That reached through Nature, moulding me."

His conclusions are ragged and worthless, if there were not something deeper which the soul of man had felt and accepted. Steeped as his poetry may be in the Christian tradition, there is no distinct evidence of the extent to which he accepted it, but the man who, in his younger days, could only "faintly trust the larger hope" looked out into the dark with straight eyes, when the "one clear call" came to him.

Matthew Arnold leaves us with the impression that the Christian tradition is only a rosy shell in which once dwelt a living organism; but he handles the shell so reverently and affectionately that it seems as if he would have breathed new life into it. For him it was not possible. He mourns that the power which once transformed the world could not wake anew, and one almost feels his shiver of regret under the cold light of his Syrian stars, which watch like his own despairing eyes the one grave in the "lorn Syrian town." There is no such mournful scepticism in Tennyson. He lets

go but to lay hold afresh. To his optimism there is always a gospel to give to the world. He rises higher than most men in thought and emotion, and when he drops sharply to earth again, we have learned that his message is that of the lark singing at heaven's gate, newly discovered, not that of the dove moaning in the shadow of the wood. He stands with Science on the midway slope, acknowledges the long journey which man has taken to reach his present standpoint, admits the mountainous road lying before the race, but suffuses headland after headland with the rich colours of the good time to come. Every sharp angle and harsh line is subdued by the atmosphere of the spiritual in which his work lives. Many a doubt-driven soul may have found sympathy in his hesitations and misgivings; none have been sent comfortless and empty away. He realizes the demand of faith for some specific form—

“Leave thou thy sister when she prays,  
Her early Heaven, her happy views,”

and speaks with full content of Mary, whose

“one deep love doth supersede  
All other, when her ardent gaze  
Roves from the living brother's face,  
And rests upon the Life indeed.

. . . . .  
What souls possess themselves so pure,  
Or is there blessedness like theirs.”

His position in religious thought is, of course, to be found largely in his long poem “In Memoriam.” However delicately phrased and delightfully expressed are many of the passages, one cannot but criticise the form and character of that poem. It is supposed to be a monumental expression of grief at the death of Arthur Hallam. In reality, it is a fine philosophical disquisition on human sorrow, parting, and death; a groping in the dark after some real consolation. There are, of course, many references to his own particular loss, but these are restrained; to some degree conven-

tional, and altogether incidental. The popularity of the poem is due to its being a dirge of death, available for any and every bereaved heart. It is a requiem for the race, a valley of the shadow, lit by half lights, filled with soft music which rises into a wail or drops to a cradle-song, the air fragrant with unseen flowers, which speak of joys long past, and subtly suggest the hope of others to come. The sound of weeping is almost stilled when this sad music is heard; a Rachel hushes her crying because her full heart finds intense expression in her poet's words. Yet when all has been said, these are not the accents of personal grief. Nor has even Art been true to Nature in giving a faithful representation of a first loss. It is an elegy; precise, carefully punctuated, well-found. A great passion would scorn bit and bridle; emotion cannot be parcelled out in compartments. A true requiem would have broken loose from form and metre, sometimes rising in shattering sound to the skies, at others muttering in whispers prone to the earth. Taine may have been severe, but to a degree he is right. The eyes were dry; the tears had all been shed; the particular loss had mingled with universal fate, and had been accepted as inevitable. The stanzas are not flung stone by stone, heaped like the cairn of a dead chieftain upon the wild mountain side. They are the cypress alleys, the well-trimmed beds of the cemetery. Great as the poem is, it belongs to the race rather than to Arthur Hallam. What can we learn about the poet's dead friend from "In Memoriam"? Hardly so much as David told us in a few lines about his lost Jonathan. We should gather that he was a clever University youth, to whom Tennyson was deeply attached, and who was about to marry Tennyson's sister. But the dead man speaks not; there is no glimpse into his true character. There is no voice which comes from the infinite night to celebrate the hero who might have been; nay, it is Tennyson himself who lives in his creation, probably a much greater man than the friend whom he idealized

in the warmth of impressionable youth. Though one may quarrel with the form of "In Memoriam," one holds one's breath at the chastened English, the absolute fitness of expression, the pungency of thought, the strength and beauty which make some of the noblest passages in our language. When Arthur Hallam is only a name, and when perhaps "In Memoriam" itself shall be set far back in English literature, low down the horizon,—there are stanzas, verses, phrases, which will for ever ring in the mother language and her kindred tongues. Here was a mind fully sensitive to visions of beauty, who sang of his Claribels, Lilians, Adelines and Isabels like any other young poet working his upward way to the highest creations of womanhood, and who yet groups his greatest poem about a college friend. His was not the luscious song of some dancing faun, half beast, half man, beating his hoofs in voluptuous sympathy with his own melody. Finely sensuous, and using passion with the true dramatic instinct, he yields to the higher spiritual quality, which both comprehends and transcends human love.

We have already referred to the succession of poems gathered about the legendary Arthur. It may be that most of these will fall into the category of English classics with *The Faery Queen* and *Paradise Lost*; worshipped on the shelf rather than dear to eager eyes and hands. There is, however, the breath of wholesome English summer through them all. Before wave after wave of Northmen had spread over England, and brutalised it for a thousand years, we have a picture of a land of romance, steeped in the westering sunlight, where, though the shadows are lengthening ominously, there is yet to be found chivalrous war and cultured peace, a noble countryside not devoid of mystic ideals. Yet it is no visionary world; the problems of humanity are worked out in it, evil and good strive for the mastery; the harlot plies her trade, and adultery stalks in high places, but the colours are true, and the consequences are never doubtful. The poet leads Love



up step by step from the lowliest ground, to be seated in the person of Guinevere on the highest throne, and then to be eclipsed by the dark stain of passion. Yet the love emerges, widowed it may be, but true and undimmed. The nearest love to Christ's own Self, that of the completed marriage life, breaks out triumphant at the last, both in Arthur and Guinevere. Cleft in twain for a time by the guilty queen, but to be reunited "where beyond these voices there is peace."

"Let no man dream but that I love thee still."

"Hereafter in that world where all are pure  
We too may meet before high God, and thou  
Wilt spring to me, and claim me thine, and know  
I am thine husband—not a smaller soul,  
Nor Lancelot, nor another. Leave me that,  
I charge thee, my last hope.

"Then, listening till those armed steps were gone,  
Rose the pale Queen, and in her anguish found  
The casement: 'Peradventure,' so she thought,  
'If I might see his face, and not be seen,'  
And lo, he sat on horseback at the door!  
And near him the sad nuns with each a light  
Stood, and he gave them charge about the Queen,  
To guard and foster her for evermore.  
And while he spake to these his helm was lowered,  
To which for crest the golden dragon clung  
Of Britain; So she did not see the face,  
Which then was as an angel's, but she saw,  
Wet with the mists and smitten by the lights,  
The Dragon of the great Pendragonship  
Blaze, making all the night a steam of fire,  
And even then he turn'd. . . .  
Then she stretched out her arms and cried aloud  
'Oh Arthur!' . . .

. . . . . 'Is there none  
Will tell the King I love him tho' so late?  
Now—ere he goes to the great Battle? none:  
Myself must tell him in that purer life.

We needs must love the highest when we see it,  
Not Lancelot, nor another."

"My God, and she is emptied of it now!  
Outright now!—how miraculously gone  
All of the grace—had she not strange grace once?"

It is always dangerous to prescribe for immortality, yet we have had experience how lyrical poetry outlives much of larger ambition. In his lyrics Tennyson has outshone himself. If the face of England were ground down by a new glacial age, the tender beauties of its landscape could almost be reproduced for the descendants of those who fled from the arctic advance, carrying his music in their memories. Scattered through his work there are the dainty touches of the master painter, impressionist indeed, but one who loves nature deeply in detail. He works out little vignette pictures of English scenery in initial letters or on the running margin of his poems. We wander after him from his grey Lincolnshire flats into the

sunny nooks of Southern England, where he spent his best days. If the "In Memoriam" is like a rope of black pearls, badly sorted, for size and company, Tennyson's lyrical poems are each a brilliant, complete in itself, equally valuable if detached from its setting. Some, in their changeful beauty, outshine the larger poem in which they are embedded. They have the rare combination in lyrical poetry of fine thought with perfect rhythmic expression. The vibration of their music will never die out of the English atmosphere. In fact, the freshness and purity of Tennyson's English are apt to deceive us as to the depth of his thinking. In clear water we count the pebbles at the bottom and think them far nearer than they are. There is much worthy of criticism in the dramatic and other subordinate pieces of Tennyson. With an inferior poet these would attract far more attention, but his central towers soar so high that the lower buildings are unduly dwarfed. The generation that knew Tennyson has taken his reputation to its heart, as it has hoarded his dust in its most sacred home. Let the coming centuries place him where they will, those who have listened face to face, spell-bound at his genius, cannot place him too high.

J. COMPTON RICKETT.

## Robert Browning

SOME poets have an epic talent; they can tell a story well. They usually begin at the beginning, come gradually on to the middle, and then progress steadily to the end. They state all the facts, as they occurred, in strict chronological order; and so give us an orderly narrative, clear and simple, such as any child can understand. And yet, there is plenty of room for any amount of beautiful description, of sparkling conversation, and every other kind of poetic embellishment. In most cases these "epic" poets, if I may call them so, tell us their story *ab extrâ*, from the outside. They describe everything as it would appear to a bystander who saw the occurrences really happening before his eyes; or as spectators in a theatre see the drama acted before them. We see what the characters do, we hear what they say, and from what they do and say we gather what is passing in their minds.

But this is not Robert Browning's method. What especially interested him was the working of the human heart, and the effect of external circumstances on the character and soul of man. He peers beneath external appearances, and ever asks himself, Given such and such a set of circumstances, how would a man or woman act, so placed? What permanent or transitory effect would these external matters produce within? He does not, as a rule, care to describe what any one can see for himself. He was gifted with the highest and quickest power of discernment; and his desire always was to probe beneath the surface, and to show his readers something that is not obvious to the



casual bystander. Hence nearly all Browning's poems are written in the first person. He makes the man disclose his own character and purposes, reveal himself, in fact. And this result follows, that it is next door to impossible for him to tell the story in strict chronological order. It is not often that a man when communing with himself goes steadily through the long chain of events and circumstances which brought him to this pass. He throws out an allusion now and then to the acts done by other persons in the story; but such allusions are more in the nature of comments on their conduct than an accurate description of what they really did. Men and women, as a rule, do not sit down by themselves and go *seriatim* through the whole of a long story with which they are already perfectly familiar.

Sometimes this difficulty is removed by introducing a second person, a kind of attendant Boswell, with a spice of Paul Pry in him, who "wants to know all about it." This affords an excuse for a more or less orderly narration of the facts. Thus, seven friends call on Fust, the printer. Or the Pope in the "Ring and the Book" is supposed to have certain Cardinals and others present, who are interested to hear the view he takes of Guido's crime. So too, we have sometimes a priest at the confessional, hearing the story of crime, or a grandfather repeating to his grandchildren a legend of his youth. Martin Relph, like the Ancient Mariner, seems to think he has the right to stop any casual wayfarer, and make him listen to the whole story, and then to call on him to say whether Martin Relph when a boy was a murderer or only a coward—an awkward question, indeed, for the casual wayfarer to have to decide. But in all these cases there is still much the same difficulty. We begin at the end, and then hark back to the more or less distant past, which is the beginning of the story. It is difficult to keep to strict chronological order, whenever the hero of the tale is himself the person speaking.

And yet, after all, is not the introspective method—

the making a man reveal his own soul—a higher and deeper and nobler kind of poetry than the mere epic description of things as seen? Take such a picture as Frith's Derby Day, or his Railway Station. The canvas is crowded with figures, each of which one might see any day on Epsom Downs or at Waterloo. It is life-like, full of interest and of incident, but is it the highest art? So there is a recent well-known picture with Jesus at the left being led away to crucifixion, with Pontius Pilate in the centre washing his hands before the people, and Barabbas on the right hand being released, with glad surprise in his eyes, and welcomed by his friends. A beautiful and a comprehensive picture, and one that tells its story infallibly to the million. But if an artist could draw us just the face of Christ and nothing more, and paint it so that we could read in his eyes the infinite love and the infinite sorrow, if a painter *could* paint it so that any one looking into those eyes could read there the story of the noblest self-sacrifice in human history, would not that be the truer and higher art?

No doubt this poetry written from the "inside," so to speak, is not so easy to follow and understand as poems which are thrown into the form of connected narrative and deal with external matters only. The reader misses his Prologue. He is startled by being plunged at once *in medias res*. When he comes across a poem beginning thus:—

"You're my friend;  
I was the man the Duke spoke to,"

he feels inclined to cry out, "Here, stop a bit! who's whose friend, and why did the Duke speak to him?" He wants a kind of "Argument," such as used to be prefixed to each book of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. You can see the kind of thing in any issue of those local daily papers that publish novels at the rate of a column a day. The Editor kindly inserts in front of Chapter VII, a brief *résumé* of Chapters I. to VI. for

the benefit of the casual purchaser of an isolated copy. But with Browning we plunge at once into Chapter VII., and we have to pick up the facts of the six lost chapters as best we can!

Now contrast Tennyson with Browning. Take any well-known poem of his; for instance "The Revenge." The Laureate begins at the beginning:—

"At Flores in the Azores Sir Richard Grenville lay,  
And a pinnacle, like a fluttered bird, came flying from far  
away.

'Spanish ships of war at sea! we have sighted fifty-three,'"

and so on. Then there is a discussion, Shall we fight or fly? "Then sware Lord Thomas Howard," "Then spake Sir Richard Grenville." And then the men of Bideford in Devon, are carried on board "very carefully and slow," while Lord Howard sails away

"with five ships of war that day  
Till he melted like a cloud in the silent summer heaven."

Each step in the story is described in strict sequence, just as it occurred, just as though an accurate reporter had been present and had taken down exactly what everybody said and did. For, mark you, no hint is given us as to what anybody *thought*, except in so far as we gather it from what they said and did. That is just like real life. The master gunner may have thought that it was very foolish of Sir Richard to order him to blow up the ship. No doubt some mournful recollection of his wife and babes at home passed through the gunner's mind. But we are not allowed to learn his thoughts. The poet only tells us that "the gunner said 'Ay! Ay!'" And this again is just like real life. If you or I had been on the deck of "The Revenge," all that we should have seen would have been that gunner pulling his forelock, and all we should have heard would have been the words "Ay, Ay."

But if Robert Browning had essayed to write a poem on the loss of "The Revenge," a very different method

would have been employed. He would have begun at the end. We should have Sir Richard Grenville soliloquising on board the Spanish flagship. The poem would have opened abruptly, something like this, perhaps :—

“ Here I, Sir Richard Grenville, lie !  
 Here on Spanish deck I die !  
 And these Spanish curs stand round,  
 With their courtesies profound.  
 Gr—r—r—, you swine ! ”

Then we should have had his views on death and eternity—a frank exposition of the simple faith of an Elizabethan Puritan, intermingled with a wholesome hatred of Spain. Then his views as to the conduct of his men in surrendering the ship, contrary to his orders. These would have come in for some good round abuse.<sup>1</sup> Then about the middle of the poem would come the first allusion to Lord Thomas Howard, and just before the conclusion of the poem it would be mentioned, probably, for the first time, that there had been a sea-fight of an unusual kind between one little English ship and fifty-three Spanish galleons !

Now suppose Tennyson had been reading his *King Lear* and had lit suddenly on that line from an old ballad, which lies in the midst of the wild ramblings of “ Poor Tom,” like a jewel on a dung-hill,—

“ Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came ” ;

and suppose further that the beauty of this isolated fragment had so wrought on Tennyson’s mind that he felt compelled to write a poem upon it. In all probability the line would never have suggested to his mind the same thoughts as arose in Browning’s, so that his poem would have borne no resemblance whatever to Browning’s startling composition which bears this line as its title. But kindly assume that the same thoughts and the same story would occur

<sup>1</sup> We know, as a fact, that they did ; see the narrative of the survivors.



to Tennyson when he read that line as did in fact occur to Browning. How would he have set about telling us the tale that Browning tells? What would have been the Laureate's poetic method? First, we should have had, no doubt, some account of the Dark Tower,—a description of "the round squat turret" with no window in it, "built of brown stone"—some description, too, of the surrounding scenery. Then the Laureate would give us some inkling what was wrong with this Tower, what princess was immured in it, or what it was that knights should ride to seek there. Then would come a brilliant description of the gallant band of noble "knights who to the Dark Tower's search addressed their steps." We should see them starting on their sacred quest, riding two and two, each with a blazoned baldric, and a gemmy bridle glittering free, each with the sunlight on his broad, clear brow, while his bridle bells ring merrily; and sweet looks and favours and "perfume and flowers fall in showers" from the hands of the ladies who watch the departure of the cavalcade. Next would follow the details of their wanderings and adventures. Cuthbert would be the hero first, with his ruddy face and locks of curly gold, a universal favourite; and then his fall after one night's disgrace. Next, Giles would be the leader of the band,—Giles, the soul of honour,

"What honest men should dare (he said) he durst."

And then his treachery, his detection, his execution. And so one by one the knights fall away from the quest they have taken up and sworn to follow. Some die, some marry, some go astray, and at last "Childe Roland" is left alone, doggedly persevering in the task to which he had set his soul—his search drawn out through years of world-wide wandering—all hope dwindled into a ghost—yet he keeps on undismayed. And then we should have the last adventure; his sudden lighting on the Tower; the blowing of the horn at sunset; the answer to its echoing peal:—

"High on a nightblack horse, in nightblack arms,  
With white breastbone and barren ribs of Death,  
In the half-light—thro' the dim dawn—advanced  
The monster, and then paused, and spake no word."

And then the final contest, the victory, or defeat.

But with Browning all is different. Fierce and abrupt the poem begins:—

"My first thought was, he lied in every word,  
That hoary cripple, with malicious eye  
Askance to watch the working of his lie  
On mine, and mouth scarce able to afford  
Suppression of the glee, that pursed and scored  
Its edge at one more victim gained thereby."

No doubt such a beginning is somewhat bewildering. This is shown by the great variety of startling conjectures made by men, whom we have no other reason for deeming insane. They have been sorely puzzled over this cripple in the road, and hazard the wildest suggestions as to his personality and significance; whereas, in truth, he signifies nothing more than just what Browning tells us. He was merely a man who happened to be there, who knew the way to the Dark Tower, who truthfully imparted this information to the hero of the poem, and was tacitly abused for his pains. Yet some writers maintain that he is Father Time, because, forsooth, he is groundlessly suspected of being about to write an epitaph! Others say he is Saturn; others deem him Death, though he is not provided with a scythe. These dear critics seem to imagine that, because the poem opens with him, he must have some deep, undiscovered meaning, which will prove the key-note to the whole poem. But this is not Browning's method. He does not open his opera with an overture which contains hints of all the leading airs to come. The cripple has no more to do with the real latent meaning of the poem than the words, "You're my friend," explain the secret of the Flight of the Duchess.

But who is Childe Roland? Well, to begin with, he is not Charlemagne's Roland; he is not Roland

the paladin of France, whose castle stands at Rolands-eck, above the Isle of Nonnenwerth, in "the broad and broadening Rhine." That Roland was not a "Childe." A "childe" is a young man who has performed all knightly exercises, who is in every way fitted to be made a knight, but who first must "win his spurs." Thus the Black Prince was a "childe" on the morning of the battle of Cressy. Such a title is wholly inapplicable to the nephew of Charlemagne, to the doughty champion equal in prowess to Oliver, the Warden of the Breton marches, the general who commanded the rear-guard in Charlemagne's disastrous flight from Saragossa in 778. We all know the story: how as the Frankish army retreated, the Basques rose against them among the Pyrenees and surprised the rear-guard, and Roland blew his horn for help. But Ganelon, the traitor, the enemy of Roland, persuaded Charlemagne that Roland needed no help; he was but hunting the red deer. And then the pursuing Saracens came up, and joined the Basques in the attack; and again Roland blew his horn, and still no help came. And Roland fought the Basques and the Moors together all that day long, and beat them off at last; but all his men were slain, and he himself was sorely wounded and left alone to die. And he tried to break his magic sword Durendal against the rocks, lest the Moors should get it; but the good sword cut through the rocks, and would not break, so he flung it in the stream at Roncesvalles. And he blew his horn the third time, and no help came; so he laid him down to die. Perhaps this notion of the hero dying in solitude may have had some unconscious bearing on Browning's poem. But this Roland, so dear to Taillefer and the Troubadours, to Pulci, Boiardo, and Ariosto, is not the Childe Roland known to Shakespeare's boyhood. For the real Roland of whom Edgar sang in *King Lear* was no Frenchman; he was English bred and born, or at least of Celtic race. You will find the whole story in Jamieson's *Illustrations of Northern Antiquities*, in the form



of a ballad that he learnt from a Cumberland cobbler. A ballad full of startling interest; for it seems that King Arthur and Queen Guinevere were living at Carlisle—why these thieves of the Border should try to annex our Somersetshire King Arthur, I never can understand, but even the canny Scot claims to place him in Edinburgh—and Guinevere and Arthur have three sons, and one fair daughter, Burd<sup>1</sup> Helen. This is news indeed! There would never have been any trouble with Lancelot, if only Guinevere had had three lusty boys and one grown-up girl to look after. And the three boys are playing at football under Carlisle Wall, and their sister, as a sister should, is looking on admiringly and “fagging” for them. Then the eldest son kicked a mighty kick, and the ball flew right over the roof of the church, and Helen ran to fetch it for her brother. But in her haste she ran the wrong way round the end of the church; she ran round it “widdershins,” the wrong way of the sun. And we all know that if any one runs round the chancel of a church widdershins, he or she at once falls into the power of the Elfin King! And so it was with Burd Helen; she never came back; and when her brothers went to look for her, there was the football, but no Burd Helen. What was to be done? Why, of course, they sought out Merlin, and asked his advice. From him they gained the sad intelligence that their sister was no doubt shut up in the green hill of the Elfin King, and they must go and seek her. And then begins the Quest. First the elder brother goes, and then the second, but neither obeys to the letter Merlin’s minute instructions; and they both, like their sister, fall into the power of the Elfin King. And then at last goes Roland, the youngest of the three; a “childe” not yet a knight; and, like his brothers, he takes ship, and sails across the seas. He does everything that Merlin bade him, and he rescues his sister and his two brothers from the green hill in which they were

<sup>1</sup> “Burd” is the same word as Bride, and means a marriageable girl, not yet married.



ensconced. This is obviously a north-country ballad. One can tell that from the heroes taking ship. In the legends of Mid-Europe the knights ride and ride for ever through endless gloomy forests. They go everywhere on horseback. But in the ballads of our hardy ancestors your adventurer always takes to the sea; the happy Islands of which he is in quest lie ever across the ocean waves.

And this ballad of Childe Roland was well known in Shakespeare's time. He and many others whom he met at the Rainbow had heard it sung when they were children, and more than one allusion will be found to the tale in the Elizabethan drama. The green hill was somehow changed to a Dark Tower, but I cannot tell you when. This was the only Childe Roland at all events that Shakespeare knew. And with this legend in his mind, Browning sits down, not to write a ballad, not to tell the children a fairy tale, but to write an introspective poem. The thing that interests Browning is the state of the man's mind. How would he feel? what would he be thinking of, riding there all alone, the last of the band? He

"had so long suffered in this quest,  
Heard failure prophesied so oft, been writ  
So many times among 'The Band,'—to wit,  
The Knights who to the Dark Tower's search addressed  
Their steps—that just to fail as they, seemed best."

Gloomy he would be, and morbid to a degree. All the fun and frolic of the quest had vanished; all joyous enterprise had faded out long, long ago; all hope was lost; but there still remained the dogged perseverance and pluck of the genuine Englishman who won't give up when he is beaten. He knows that his comrades all have failed; he knows that he too is almost sure to fail; and yet with set teeth, with purpose unweakened, on he goes steadily to his doom. He has grown suspicious of every one and everything he meets. He jumps to the conclusion that the cripple, who was guiding him aright, was lying in every word, yet on he goes acquiescingly the way the cripple told him.

He hates the sordid country round him; to his gloomy soul Nature wears the gloomy aspect of his own sad thoughts. There never was so wretched and forlorn a tract of land as this through which he rides; or at least to his morbid fancy so it seems; for it is really he who colours the landscape round him. And then he meets a solitary horse

“—one stiff, blind horse . . .  
Seldom went such grotesqueness with such woe;  
I never saw a brute I hated so;  
He must be wicked to deserve such pain.”

And at the mention of this horse, away fly our dear friends, the critics. Off they go at a tangent! “The poem is an allegory of death: in the Book of Revelation Death sat on ‘a pale horse’; and here is the horse!” “No,” cry the others, “the poem is an allegory of life; in the Book of Revelation the angel who ‘went forth conquering and to conquer’ rode on a white horse; and here is the horse!” And this careless Browning never thought of telling us the colour of the forlorn quadruped whom Childe Roland encountered. It might have been a chestnut or a roan! And this much is certain, that he did not come out of the Bible at all: Browning saw him on the tapestry of a room at Paris, and annexed him for the purposes of this poem.

And on Childe Roland rides, through this desolate country, which owes no doubt most of its horrors to his own heated imagination. A sudden little river crosses his path

“As unexpected as a serpent comes,  
So petty yet so spiteful! All along,  
Low scrubby alders kneeled down over it;  
Drenched willows flung them headlong in a fit  
Of mute despair, a suicidal throng!”

Even the trees are tinged with his own morbid gloom!

“Then came a bit of stubbed ground, once a wood,  
Next a marsh, it would seem, and now mere earth  
Desperate and done with; (so a fool finds mirth

Makes a thing and then mars it, till his mood  
 Changes and off he goes!). Within a rood  
 Bog, clay and rubble, sand and stark black dearth."

And it is only incidentally that in his self-communing a hint is thrown out, just here and there, from which we learn the story of the Quest, that there had been a band of knights who started to find the Dark Tower, and that all save him had failed. Wearied of all that could be seen, he shuts his eyes and turns them on his heart.

"As a man calls for wine before he fights,  
 I asked one draught of earlier, happier sights,  
 Ere fitly I could hope to play my part."

But the past has no comfort for him. There is nothing to encourage or to inspire him in the remembrance of the gallant band of knights that started with him on this quest, full of joy and hope. Where are they now? All dead or lost, and some disgraced. Just one stanza is given to Cuthbert, one to Giles. Buried in these gloomy recollections, he rides on, deeming himself to be "just as far as ever from the end!" When suddenly comes "a click as when a trap shuts." The quest is over; the moment has come; this is the place; and the man is ready for his task!

"Burningly it came on me all at once,  
 This was the place! those two hills on the right  
 Crouched like two bulls locked horn in horn in fight,  
 While to the left, a tall scalped mountain . . . Dunce,  
 Dotard, a-dozing at the very nonce,  
 After a life spent training for the sight!

"What in the midst lay but the Tower itself?  
 The round squat turret, blind as the fool's heart,  
 Built of brown stone, without a counterpart  
 In the whole world . . .

"Not see? because of night perhaps?—why, day  
 Came back again for that! before it left  
 The dying sunset kindled through a cleft:  
 The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay,  
 Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay.

"Not hear? when noise was everywhere! it tolled  
 Increasing like a bell. Names in my ears,  
 Of all the lost adventurers my peers,—  
 How such a one was strong, and such was bold,  
 And such was fortunate, yet each of old  
 Lost, lost! one moment knelled the woe of years.

"There they stood, ranged along the hill-sides, met  
 To view the last of me, a living frame  
 For one more picture! in a sheet of flame  
 I saw them and I knew them all. And yet  
 Dauntless the slug-horn<sup>1</sup> to my lips I set,  
 And blew 'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came.'"

And there Browning stops. He does not tell us what came out from the Dark Tower in answer to the bugle-call. Was it ogre, gnome, or giant? Was there a fight? and did Childe Roland win, or did he fail like all the lost adventurers, his peers? The poet does not tell us. To him the interest ceases the moment the horn sounds. The period of morbid brooding and inaction is over, and the time for action had come. The mental picture vanishes in the clash of arms. Yet I myself have little doubt that our hero, who had held on his way so many years undeterred by pain and danger and disappointment, proved himself a man in the encounter, and won his fight with whatever spirit of evil lurked within the Tower.

Or it may be that Browning here would teach us quite a different moral. That if a man pluckily tries to do manfully his best, then, however sad, however lonely, his path in life may be, to that man it matters not whether in the eyes of the world he fail or succeed. In God's eyes he has succeeded; for he has borne his part bravely and done his duty as God willed.

<sup>1</sup> Browning makes a curious slip in his use of this word. A slughorn is not a horn; it is not a musical instrument at all. It is a watchword or warcry; the same word as *slogan*. The sound of a horn might be a slughorn, and in that sense a man might be said to blow a slughorn. But he could not set one to his lips.



I have dealt at this length with the poem of "Childe Roland," because it is generally regarded as one of the most difficult and incomprehensible of Browning's poems. It certainly is one of the most "Browningesque" of his poems. It contains all his most striking characteristics, good and bad; and therefore serves well as an example of his peculiar style and method. One reason certainly why so many readers have found difficulty in understanding this poem is because they have not appreciated Browning's peculiar method of "getting behind the scenes," so to speak, and making the hero himself disclose his own mind. The story only leaks out incidentally, and is regarded by the poet as quite subsidiary to the development of the mental picture. And there is a second reason: because so many people, instead of honestly trying to find out for themselves what a poet means, *will* read books and essays in which other people no more capable than themselves state what *they* conceive to be the meaning of the poem. Men and women in this nineteenth century are far too fond of reading about a poem, instead of studying the poem itself. To understand Browning is worth an effort; he does not "wear his heart upon his sleeve for the daws to peck at." But you must make the effort yourself. It will do you little good to have the solution pointed out to you by any lecturer or lawyer!

And the commentators have gone very far afield indeed over this particular poem. Some, as I have said, will have it that "Childe Roland" is an allegory of life; others are equally positive that it is an allegory of death; while some say that it is an exact and brilliant picture of the sensations which pass through a man's mind just as he is becoming insane! Whereas the poem is no allegory at all; and its hero was as sane as you or I; and the meaning is not far to seek when once you have mastered Browning's *modus operandi*. I do not say that Browning invariably adopts the method which I have described. When

he is writing a story for a child, such as "The Pied Piper of Hamelin," he does not. But it is his usual method, and it puzzles the uninitiated.

There are other reasons why some of Browning's poems are "caviare to the million" (though I am glad to know that the taste for such caviare is spreading). His vocabulary, his style, and his versification add a little, no doubt, to the difficulty which some people find in reading him. He has an immense stock of forcible words at his command, many of which are a little out of vogue. I should think his vocabulary was larger than that of any other poet since Shakespeare. And though it is always a favourite topic with Browning that language is inadequate to express thought—yet he uses his words well. He likes a good simple sturdy Saxon phrase. He is not afraid of an out-of-the-way word, even though some may not recognise its full meaning. And he uses such words with remarkable precision and force. Turn back to page 49 and read the verse beginning, "Then came a bit of stubbed ground,"—how strong and forcible are the Saxon monosyllables:—

"Bog, clay and rubble, sand and stark black dearth."

What a picture they give us of the gloomy sordid landscape! But sometimes Browning carries his plain speaking too far for our fastidious critics. You will remember how Tennyson was abused in 1833 for daring to mention in a lyrical poem

"A long green box of mignonette,"

though no one now would deem this an unpoetical phrase. But of Browning I may say in Browning's own words:—

"On I read

Presently, though my path grew perilous,  
Between the outspread straw-work, piles of plait,  
Through fire-irons, tribes of tongs, shovels in sheaves,  
Skeleton bedsteads, wardrobe drawers agape,  
Rows of tall slim brass lamps with dangling gear,  
And worse, cast clothes a-sweetening in the sun."

I confess such a line as this seems to me to fall below the dignity of true poetry:—

“Bang, whang, whang, goes the drum, tootle-te-tootle  
the fife.”

And why need he use such words as “rub-dub,” and “gastro-knemian”?

Browning’s style, too, saddens and appals some gentle readers. It is so unnecessarily jerky; and his sentences are so intricate and involved. “But why?” “Ask Learning!” “Come whence? Go whither?” “That’s the rule—with even a rope of mushrooms.” “Enough o’ the dream! You see how poetry turns prose.” Yes, alas! in Browning’s later poems we often do! Then he is far too fond of sudden little apostrophes, addressed to nobody in particular, like “Solve it, you”; “But you shall hear”; “Ask Plato, else,” etc. Often we have to turn back and search for inverted commas before we can tell which of the persons in his imaginary dialogue is speaking. They both talk so like Browning! Then, again, he makes his lines abrupt, and his meaning obscure, by omitting all the lesser relative pronouns and other of “the smaller parts of speech.” For instance, when Browning writes,—

“this basket-load I wish  
Well off my arm, it breaks,—”

he means, “This basket-load *that* I wish *were* well off my arm *which* it breaks.” And oh! the terrible involution of his incessant parentheses—half of them unnecessary—half worthy to be sentences by themselves!

Why all these breaks—and jerks—and brackets?—solve it, you!

And all his characters do it! Now and then we have a few consecutive straightforward lines; but sure as fate, whoever is talking—be it Fifine, or Phene, or Legate Ogniben, or one of the Initiated

Druses—back he or she returns to the true Browning style, which it requires a somewhat lengthy education to thoroughly enjoy.

And yet how clear and simple, how forcible and direct, Browning can be when he chooses! Here is a verse from "The Laboratory," composed almost entirely of monosyllables—emphatic monosyllables, each fraught with a terrible meaning. It is a model of clear writing—not one word too much, not one word that can be spared:—

"*He is with her; and they know that I know  
Where they are, what they do: they believe my tears flow,  
While they laugh, laugh at me, at me fled to the drear  
Empty church to pray God in for them!—I am here.*"

It is strange that Browning's versification should repel any of his readers. But it does. He is a great master of metre. The volumes of his poems contain every variety of stanza, ode, and ballad-metre. There are hardly two alike. None of his lyrics are in precisely the same form. But often his lines are rugged and halting. Sometimes he is purposely rough; and the roughness adds to the force and possibly to the tenderness of his phrase. But other lines are negligently written and left unpolished where polish was needed. Pope would have said no doubt that Browning wanted

"The last and greatest art, the art to blot."

I am far from agreeing that the art to blot is the greatest art, but I admit that Browning's poetry would often be the better, had he blotted more.

For he can be graceful and most melodious when he tries. Read *The Flower's Name* in "Garden Fancies"; it is as smooth and melodious as the garden-song in *Maud*. Or read this verse from the *Pied Piper*:—

"Once more he stept into the street;  
And to his lips again  
Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane;



And ere he blew three notes (such sweet  
Soft notes as yet musician's cunning  
Never gave the enraptured air)," etc.

Or the one line which ends the Second Act of  
Strafford:—

"Night has its first supreme forsaken star."

And what can be lovelier than the concluding lines  
of the first scene in "Pippa Passes":—

"But let the sun shine! wherefore repine?  
With thee to lead me, O Day of mine,  
Down the grass path grey with dew,  
Under the pine-wood, blind with boughs,  
Where the swallow never flew,  
Nor yet cicala dared carouse—  
No, dared carouse!"

Or these in Ferishtah's Fancies:—

"Round us the wild creatures, overhead the trees,  
Underfoot the moss-tracks,—life and love with these!  
I to wear a fawnskin, thou to dress in flowers,  
All the long lone Summer-day, that greenwood life of ours!"

Still, I fear I must admit that Browning, especially after the death of his wife, wrote too fast and wrote too much. Such a poem for instance as "Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau, Saviour of Society," added nothing to his reputation. And because he wrote too fast, his style became more and more involved; and he took more and more liberties with his metre. When the reader expects a rhythmic flow of steady iambs, he is suddenly tripped up by a string of most offensive anapaests. Take such a line as this for example:—

"The worship of that prince o' the power o' the air."

Or this on the same page:—

"By soul,—the lust o' the flesh, lust of the eye."

Who can read the lines so overweighted without a jar? Moreover, their effect is comic; they mar the poet's serious purpose. Yet one constantly meets

verses beginning "I' the mind o' the Master," "I' the deep of things," or "I' the particoloured world," or "O' the valley-fatness, unafraid—for why?" While this line is not verse at all; it is pure prose; it will not scan,—

"God, man, or mixture, proved only to be a nymph."

A poet has no right to play such tricks with his metre. And then, too, his hideous double rhymes! It is all very well to imitate Butler in a quasi-comic poem like "The Pied Piper,"

"An hour they sat in council,  
At length the Mayor broke silence:  
For a guilder, I'd my ermine gown sell;  
I wish I were a mile hence!"

But why should Hudibrastic rhymes pursue us through the whole length of Peter Ronsard's tale of The Glove, which is meant to be serious?

"Here we've got peace; and aghast I'm  
Caught thinking war the true pastime.  
For De Lorge, he made women with men vie,  
Those in wonder and praise, these in envy  
And in short stood so plain a head taller  
That he wooed and won . . . how do you call her?  
The beauty, that rose in the sequel  
To the king's love, who loved her a week well," etc.

And why should "A Grammarian's Funeral" be disfigured by such a rhyme as this:—

"Fancy the fabric,  
Ere mortar dab brick!"

Browning was a London University man, and probably never wrote any Greek or Latin verse. Tennyson in all probability spent years of his school life in making hexameters and pentameters. He was taught all about Caesura, and that an hexameter should not end with two dissyllables, like "Gre<sup>x</sup> petit undas." The influence of this classical training can be seen all

through the beautiful versification of the "Idylls of the King." There the language is polished, and the metre is faultlessly correct. Tennyson is an Apollo; while Browning's verse is oftentimes like Vulcan dancing. Yes, it must be admitted that Tennyson is a better versifier than Browning. His poems are pleasanter to read. But Browning is the stronger man, and the greater poet. Tennyson, after all, is but to Browning as Virgil is to Aeschylus.

For in spite of all the spots upon the sun, which I have pointed out above, Browning is a mighty poet. Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning, are the three greatest poets of this century, and Browning's was the strongest intellect, the hardest head, of the three. He was born in 1812, when Wordsworth was a man of forty-two, and Tennyson a baby three years old. He died in 1889, when Wordsworth had been buried thirty-nine years; and Tennyson survived him just three years. Browning, like several of our greatest poets—Chaucer, Spenser, Ben Jonson, Milton, Pope—was born in London; Wordsworth and Tennyson were both born in the country. Browning spent all his life in towns,—in London, Pisa, Paris, Florence, or Rome. To this, perhaps, we owe the fact that Browning seems to share Pope's view, that

"The proper study of mankind is man,"

while both Wordsworth and Tennyson would rather follow Cowper in his declaration:

"God made the country; and man made the town."

Browning himself writes:—

"Up and down amid men, heart by heart fare we,  
God is soul, souls I and thou; with souls should souls  
have place."

The chief event in Browning's somewhat uneventful life was his romantic marriage, in 1846, to Miss Elizabeth Barrett, herself a poetess; and for fifteen

years their married life was of the happiest. They read together; they worked together; she was writing "Aurora Leigh," and he "Men and Women." And yet—strange to say—while they lived and studied together, neither had much influence on the poetry of the other; they each preserved their own individuality intact. His union with such a woman could not but raise Browning's ideal of the sex: the love he felt for his wife is shown by such poems as "One Word More," and "O Lyric Love." But it is a fact that her influence on him was stronger after her death than while they were together.

For Browning was a man who stood very much alone—on his own feet, so to speak. He does not fall into line with other poets. He was not in any way the product of his predecessors. He drew no inspiration from the German poets, as Wordsworth and Coleridge did. He had far more sympathy with the Italians. He was not steeped in the classics of Greece and Rome, like Milton or Swinburne. He is not of the school of Wordsworth; he is far more cosmopolitan than Tennyson. And, moreover, he has no followers—no serious imitators. Traces of his influence may now and again be caught in Dante Rossetti and other younger men; but they are merely transient. Browning founded no school.

Yet he was, I repeat, a strong man and a mighty poet. He is a poet in the true sense of the word. His men and women live and breathe. We feel that they are human beings. They are not types of virtues and vices; they are not philosophical abstractions; they are not lay figures æsthetically clothed. They are flesh and blood, erring humanity, with some conscience left in them after all, some flickering spark of the divine still lingering in their hearts. Browning is a ποιητής, a maker. We have seen what a poem he could construct from the chance fragment of an ancient ballad that Shakespeare's whim placed in the mouth of Mad Tom. And from another scrap of Shakespeare,—four words in *The Tempest*: "my dam's god, Setebos,"



he creates "Caliban upon Setebos," that wonderful picture of anthropomorphic theology, Caliban's idea of his mother's god, the savage shaping God after his own likeness, as many also do, who are not savages. Browning has a great power of vivid portraiture. He has, moreover, the wonderful talent of flinging himself back into any race, or clime, or period. Take any volume of his poems at random, and you find the men and women of to-day cheek by jowl with Greeks and Romans, and knights of the Middle Ages; he seems equally at home with Napoleon, Frà Lippo Lippi, Count Gismond, Ned Bratts, Theocrite, Lilith, Hervé Riel, and Mr. Sludge the Medium. And they are all equally clear, distinct, and life-life.

Take such a poem as "How they brought the good news from Ghent to Aix":—

"I sprang to the stirrup, and Joris, and he;  
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three."

One seems to hear at once the clatter of the horses' hoofs upon the hard high road. I have never yet met any one who could tell me what the good news was, or how and why it "alone could save Aix from its fate." But what does that matter? Away with such carping criticisms. We *see* the three men riding, with

"Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace  
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place."

Then the cocks crow, and twilight dawns; still on they gallop—

"From Mecheln church steeple we heard the half-chime—  
So Joris broke silence with 'Yet there is time!'  
At Aerschot up leaped of a sudden the sun,  
And against him the cattle stood black every one,  
To stare through the mist at us galloping past,  
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last."

As we read the poem, we believe with the most implicit trust in the absolute importance of the enterprise which these three men have in hand. We feel

that life and death depend on their reaching Aix ere noon, so great is the poet's power, so graphic are his words.

Or turn to the epistle of "Karshish, the Arab Physician." How absolutely real it is! Who can doubt that Karshish and Abib lived and walked, and that Karshish really came to Jericho and there saw the risen Lazarus, and studied his case as an interesting instance "of mania subinduced by epilepsy." Then comes a wonderful picture of Lazarus' after-life, of the peculiar state of mind which resulted from his having been three days in the grave. His ideas of right and wrong, of what is important, what unimportant, are utterly different from those of all his fellow-townsmen. The sage himself, "the Nazarene, who wrought this cure," perished, it seems, in a tumult many years ago,

"Accused—our learning's fate—of wizardry,  
Rebellion, to the setting up a rule  
And creed prodigious as described to me."

Then comes the statement that Lazarus, "our patient Lazarus," being "stark mad,"—

"Regards the curer  
As—God forgive me!—who but God himself,  
Creator and Sustainer of the world,  
That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile!  
—'Sayeth that such a one was born and lived,  
Taught, healed the sick, broke bread at his own house,  
Then died, with Lazarus by, for aught I know,  
And yet was . . . what I said nor choose repeat,  
And must have so avouched himself, in fact,  
In hearing of this very Lazarus,  
Who saith—but why all this of what he saith?  
Why write of trivial matters, things of price  
Calling at every moment for remark?  
I noticed on the margin of a pool  
Blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort,  
Aboundeth, very nitrous. It is strange!"

What wonderful realism, what wonderful irony, there is in this passage! The great physician is brought suddenly face to face for the first time with

news of the doctrine of the Incarnation. It startles and it staggers him, and he turns aside at once to write about a flower, blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort. But the man is stirred to his innermost soul. He cannot himself account for the peculiar interest and awe with which Lazarus has touched him. He apologises for wasting Abib's time with such a trivial matter. But in the next line he cries, with all his soul aflame:—

"The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?  
So, the All-Great were the All-Loving too—  
So, through the thunder comes a human voice  
Saying, 'O heart I made, a heart beats here!  
Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself,  
Thou hast no power nor may'st conceive of mine,  
But love I gave thee, with myself to love,  
And thou must love me who have died for thee!'"  
The madman saith He said so: it is strange."

There are similar power, similar realism, and similar irony in the beautiful poem of Cleon. Cleon is the poet, the sculptor, the painter, the philosopher, the perfect heathen, whose works are known throughout the Isles of Greece. The epic written on a hundred plates of gold is his. His is—

"the little chaunt  
So sure to rise from every fishing-bark  
When, lights at prow, the seamen haul their nets."

The image of the sun-god on the lighthouse is his. The Painted Porch is his, painting, architecture, and all. He is a musician who has "combined the moods, inventing one." Moreover, he had—

"written three books on the soul  
Proving absurd all written hitherto,  
And putting us to ignorance again."

In brief all arts are his. And to him in his home among

"the sprinkled isles,  
Lily on lily, that o'erlace the sea,  
And laugh their pride when the light wave lisps 'Greece,'"

Protos the tyrant sends greetings, and many a costly gift, and a letter asking, Can it be that one man could produce all these marvellous works? Can one mind be so varied and so manifold? And with some pride Cleon replies, Yes, alone I did it; I alone have done all these things; my powers are known and recognised throughout our seventeen islands:—

"I have not chanted verse like Homer, no—  
Nor swept string like Terpander, no—nor carved  
And painted men like Phidias and his friend:  
I am not great as they are, point by point:  
But I have entered into sympathy  
With these four, running these into one soul,  
Who, separate, ignored each others' arts."

Then comes Protos' second question. Can it be that an intellect so varied, a mind so gifted, will be effaced at death? And if that must be, then is the fact that Cleon has attained such great success in all branches of art any compensation, any comfort; does it, in fact, make Cleon fear death less than Protos does, whom men deem fortunate, because he has attained the tyranny? Protos supposes that when facing death it will be a pleasure to Cleon to remember how much he leaves behind him. He will live in men's memories when the King is forgotten and dethroned:—

"Thou leavest much behind, while I leave nought:  
Thy life stays in the poems men shall sing,  
The pictures men shall study; while my life,  
Complete and whole now in its power and joy,  
Dies altogether with my brain and arm.  
. . . . . But what  
Thou writest, paintest, stays; that does not die;  
Sappho survives, because we sing her songs,  
And Aeschylus, because we read his plays!"

But Cleon answers that this is no comfort to him, rather the reverse. Protos is tripping on a mere word. Cleon will no more survive than Protos will. The fact that his pictures, songs, statues, and music will live after him is rather an aggravation of the



grief which he feels as lengthening years are bringing him nearer death:—

“Say rather that my fate is deadlier still,  
 In this—that every day my sense of joy  
 Grows more acute, my soul (intensified  
 By power and insight) more enlarged, more keen;  
 While every day my hairs fall more and more,  
 My hand shakes, and the heavy years increase—  
 The horror quickening still from year to year,  
 The consummation coming past escape,  
 When I shall know most, and yet least enjoy—  
 When all my works wherein I prove my worth,  
 Bring present still to mock me in men’s mouths,  
 Alive still in the phrase of such as thou,  
 I, I, the feeling, thinking, acting man,  
 The man who loved his life so over-much,  
 Shall sleep in my urn. It is so horrible,  
 I dare at times imagine to my need  
 Some future state revealed to us by Zeus,  
 Unlimited in capability  
 For joy as this is in desire for joy,  
 To seek which, the joy-hunger forces us:  
 That, stung by straitness of our life, made strait:  
 On purpose to make sweet the life at large—  
 Freed by the throbbing impulse we call death,  
 We burst there as the worm into the fly,  
 Who, while a worm still, wants his wings. But, no!  
 Zeus has not yet revealed it; and, alas,  
 He must have done so were it possible.”

Cleon here opens his heart to Protos. He reveals the immense longing that these old heathens had for a future life, the strong yearning to believe that such a thing was at all events possible. We see the same state of mind portrayed with equal clearness in Cicero’s “De Senectute.”

And then comes a magnificent touch of irony. The very truth which Cleon says Zeus had not yet revealed, has been quite lately just within his reach. Some early Christians had landed on his isle some days before and preached Christ crucified. Their doctrine was of course rejected and despised by a learned philosopher like Cleon! How naturally, how simply, how naively is this fact brought out:—

"Live long and happy, and in that thought die,  
 Glad for what was. Farewell. And for the rest,  
 I cannot tell thy messenger aright  
 Where to deliver what he bears of thine  
 To one called Paulus—we have heard his fame  
 Indeed, if Christus be not one with him—  
 I know not, nor am troubled much to know.  
 Thou canst not think a mere barbarian Jew,  
 As Paulus proves to be, one circumcised,  
 Hath access to a secret shut from us?  
 Thou wrongest our philosophy, O king,  
 In stooping to inquire of such an one,  
 As if his answer could impose at all.  
 He writeth, doth he? well, and he may write.  
 Oh, the Jew findeth scholars! certain slaves  
 Who touched on this same isle preached him and Christ;  
 And (as I gathered from a bystander)  
 Their doctrines could be held by no sane man."

This is one of the many poems in which Browning shows his appreciation of true art, and his sympathy with all true artists. He placed music first among the arts: he deemed it almost an inspiration straight from God. Such at least is the view which the Abbé Vogler indicates in the famous lines:—

"I know not if, save in this, such gift be allowed to man,  
 That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth sound, but a  
 star."

Yet Browning loved pictures. No one can doubt that who has read "*Fra Lippo Lippi*," "*Old Pictures in Florence*," "*Eurydice to Orpheus*," "*Pictor Ignotus*," "*Andrea del Sarto*," and above all "*The Guardian Angel*." Unfortunately few can appreciate the full meaning and beauty of this last poem who have not seen either the original or a copy of Guercino's picture in the Church of St. Augustine at Fano, on the Adriatic. Mr. and Mrs. Browning went together three times to see this picture; and then he describes it for the benefit of his absent friend, Mr. Domett, in New Zealand, whom we know as Waring. But one needs to see the picture to follow the description adequately. We cannot all visit Fano. But I hope some day we shall

have an edition of Browning with explanatory notes and pictures.

Browning, then, is a great poet, a mighty maker. And besides being a poet, he is a philosopher, a careful student of human nature, an earnest explorer of the depths of human craft and passion. He draws humanity with an exact, though loving hand. He can appreciate what is good and what is bad in both man and woman. On the whole, I like his men best: but both his men and women are true to Nature. And their characters are very diverse, though they talk so much alike.

As a rule, Browning seems to love most the seamy side of life. Rustic innocence and humdrum respectability have little charm for him.

The most fascinating of Shakespeare's creations are his good women; but with Browning, strangely, his wicked women are more striking and interesting than his virtuous heroines. Yet women admire Browning more than men do. Perhaps this is because Browning knows how to draw a *man*. His men are men, not abstract ideas, or paper puppets. Sordello, Tresham, Valence, Luria, Chiappino, Strafford, Pym, Djabal, are all real living men, carefully, vividly drawn. And the more intricate and complex the character, the more patiently does Browning elaborate the sketch. And the closer the analysis, the more real and vivid becomes the portrait. He delights especially in drawing a subtle Italian, such as Ogniben, Puccio or Braccio. And his sympathies are ever with men and women who *act*, who do something instead of talking or dreaming of doing it.<sup>1</sup> He is a lover of action, and a lover of truth. He is a keen analyst, a true metaphysician, possessed with a "rage

Of knowing, seeing, feeling, the absolute truth of things,  
For truth's sake, whole and sole."

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<sup>1</sup> This feeling carries Browning, perhaps, too far in one instance. I refer to his poem of "The Statue and the Bust"; two

And he is something better. He is a sensible, joyous, healthy-minded man. He is not only a poet and a philosopher, but, using the phrase in its nobler meaning, he is also a man of the world. He has studied human nature deeply, yet he has not lost heart or hope. He is no pessimist; he believes there is good somewhere in every human creature. Even Guido is not absolutely without some redeeming spark of contrition. Browning has large and wide sympathies. He can appreciate our wants and weaknesses. His writings do us good; they are buoyant and cheery; they put life and energy into those who are beginning to despair of mankind. He never lost his faith in humanity. He was one

"Who never turned his back, but marched breast-forward,  
 Never doubted clouds would break,  
 Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,  
 Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,  
 Sleep to wake."

He had learnt—

"To see a good in evil, and a hope  
 In ill success."

He believed that through failure we rise to victory, through error we arrive at truth.

"God's gift was that man should conceive of truth,  
 And yearn to gain it, catching at mistake,  
 As midway help till he reach fact indeed."

This is the doctrine preached at the end of "Paracelsus," that, "all things tend still upward," that "progress is the law of life;" that—

"in completed man begins anew  
 A tendency to God; types in man's self arise  
 Of a dim splendour ever on before."

Thus, "God is glorified in man."

lovers ever on the brink of a sin which they never commit. And Browning would obviously like them much better, if they sinned and had done with their shilly-shallying. Somewhat doubtful morality: yet one can understand the feeling!



And whence comes this life and hope, this psychology tempered with such ardent love, sympathy, and hope, for humanity? It comes from Browning's deep and true religion. Poet and philosopher though he be, he is above all a great religious teacher. He has not lost his trust in man because throughout all the trials of life he has preserved his belief in God. There is not only a distinctly moral tone in all his writings, there is something more, and something higher, an overwhelming sense of the presence and sympathy of God. As he says himself,—

"I recognise  
Power passing mine, immeasurable,—God,  
Above me, whom He made, as heaven beyond earth."

Robert Browning came of a sterling stock, the puritans of the West of England. He was bred as a dissenter, he was baptised in the York Street Chapel at Walworth, where they still crown his seat with roses on the anniversary of his death. Yet he rose above any narrow creed. He shook off all limitations of sect. He could see good in every branch of the Christian Church. This is the teaching of his grand poem, "Christmas Eve and Easter Day." In Mount Zion Chapel in Love Lane—in the theological lecture-room at Göttingen—under the magnificent dome of St. Peter's at Rome—in each of these places he can detect the presence of Christ. And in what poem shall we find a higher moral lesson, or nobler religious teaching, than that conveyed in Pippa's song :—

"God's in His heaven!  
All's right with the world!"

And how beautiful is the thought that underlies the whole of this poem. Pippa is a little factory girl, who has got a holiday, her one holiday of all the year. She stands to watch the sun rise "pure gold, o'er the cloud-cup's brim." What shall she do with her day? She'll pretend, as children do, that she is someone else. She will be "great haughty Ottima," the wife of

Pippa's employer, the owner of the factory. But no, Ottima is not behaving well to the old man; so Pippa will be Phene, the bride, who at noon that day will marry the great sculptor, Jules. Or, there is Luigi's devoted mother; Pippa has seen her with her son, has marked their tenderness and love; and the love of a mother for her only son is the highest form, she thinks, of human love. But the love of God is above that. She would like to share in God's love. So she will be the Bishop who has arrived in the town that day to be present at his brother's funeral. And then she ends by saying she will be just herself; for God will love her, though she be no Bishop; and any child can serve God by loving others. And so she sings her New Year's hymn:—

“All service ranks the same with God;  
If now, as formerly He trod  
Paradise, His presence fills  
Our earth, each only as God wills  
Can work—God's puppets, best and worst,  
Are we; there is no last nor first.”

And so humbly she decides:—

“I will pass by, and see their happiness,  
And envy none—being just as great, no doubt,  
Useful to men, and dear to God, as they!  
A pretty thing to care about  
So mightily, this single holiday!”

And she spends her holiday in passing up and down through town and country, singing as she goes, and all unconsciously her song changes the lives of all these people of whom she has been thinking in the morning. Ottima, and Jules, Luigi's mother, and the Bishop himself are all saved from sin, or brought to repentance, by the accident that just at the right moment Pippa passes singing. And this is one of her songs:—

“The year's at the spring,  
And day's at the morn;  
Morning's at seven;  
The hill-side's dew-pearled;

The lark's on the wing;  
The snail's on the thorn;  
God's in His heaven—  
All's right with the world."

What nobler gospel could a poet teach to the men and women of this decadent age—to us who are so introspective, so dilettante—scientific, so little in earnest on any matter, yet so anxious "either to tell, or to hear some new thing." Here is a grand old truth for us: "God is in His heaven." Ay, and on His earth, too! "His presence fills our earth," though we see Him not.

We honour Browning, then, as a great poet, and a sound philosopher, but, above all, as a sensible, honest Christian man.

W. BLAKE ODGERS.

## George Eliot

GEORGE ELIOT was wont to regard herself as an æsthetic teacher, and held such teaching to be the highest of all, since it dealt with life in its greatest complexity. But if, she contended, it ceased to be purely æsthetic, if it lapsed anywhere from the picture to the diagram, it became the most offensive of all teaching. The utterance is eminently characteristic of the complex personality which made it. It is a key to those curiously divergent sides of George Eliot's character: the artistic and didactic. The presence of such conflicting elements finds most striking expression in her novel-writing, where the imaginative sympathy of the artist supplies warmth and colour; whilst the point of view, the profound reflections on life, the almost austere idealism show the teacher, the seer, and give form and cohesion to the stories.

In process of time, however, the didactic element in her artistic work overpowered the æsthetic, and despite her severe distinction between pictures and diagrams, both *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*, particularly *Deronda*, often offend the canon so strongly insisted upon by the writer.

For the predominance of the didactic element, she has been taken much to task; and if she is only considered as novelist, this criticism may be deserved. But if she be considered as a teacher, who chose fiction as the medium for communicating her reflections and generalizations on men and things, rather than as a mere story-teller, then the artistic blemishes in her work are of less importance. Her moralising may



often be out of place, and impede the progress of the story. But few moralists were so worth heeding, and one often forgives the digression by reason of the brilliant suggestiveness.

The amazing contrast between the subject of Cross's biography and the creator of *Adam Bede* and *The Mill on the Floss* has always perplexed literary students. George Eliot, the moralist and idealist, was well known from her novels; but this anxious, self-analytical woman, with her strained, intellectual pose, was an unpleasant surprise to them. In point of fact, Cross's life is a one-sided presentation of a many-sided personality. Undoubtedly it represented a side, and the side most familiar to Mr. Cross; but it was the staid George Eliot of the seventies, rather than the woman with the strong passions, with the Maggie-Tulliver-like waywardness,—one of the brilliant Bohemians, that circled round the old *Westminster Review*. What trace is there in the biography of the writer of those polished, ironical essays in criticism, written from Mr. Chapman's boarding-house in the Strand? There is little indication in the bulky correspondence that looms out so prominently in the "Life" of the wit, the humour, the restless vitality of the George Eliot endeared to such a wide circle of friends.

In those severely analytical letters, she seems to be perpetually in a state of intellectual tip-toe. The biography of Cross is unsatisfactory in the way that all biographies written by devotees must necessarily be. Through the obscuring mist of "good, strong, stupefying incense," the woman is partly lost to sight.

And no true admirer can afford to ignore the fact that she was a woman, and not a plaster saint. Had she not felt and suffered like other women, and often acted not only unwisely but wrongly, her message would not be charged with so much passionate sternness. She knew the force of subtle temptations, and this knowledge gave a tenderness to her sympathies,

and a clearness to her vision, which, had her life been less free from blemish, she might have lacked.

## I

George Eliot started upon her career as a novelist at the age of thirty-eight. Success attended her from the very outset. The combination of acute observant powers with a remarkable faculty for reflection and generalization, gave to George Eliot her most noteworthy characteristic as a novelist. The combination was a rare one, and although every noteworthy novelist is necessarily equipped with the qualities of imagination and observation, George Eliot was the first great novelist who showed what fresh phases of human life could be treated of by the artist in fiction who was a thinker as well as an observer. Philosophy, however, is an unmanageable medium for the artist unless it is touched with humour. "He who'd make his fellow creatures wise," said Mr. W. S. Gilbert's jester, "should always gild the philosophic pill." This George Eliot usually did, and when, in her later writings, she forgot about the gilding, the result was artistically disastrous. Emerson says: "A perception of the comic seems to be a balance wheel in our metaphysical structure. We feel the absence of it in the noblest and most oracular soul."

It was this faculty of humour which gave to George Eliot's philosophy its artistic colouring, and was the secret of her success as a delineator of character.

"Humour," exclaims Carlyle, "is a sympathy with the seamy side of things." This suggestive description seizes on the essential feature of that elusive quality. Humour is certainly a sympathy with. . . . an attitude of mind, a way of looking at things. It implies a sense of incongruity, an instinct for proportion. Pathos also is a sympathy with the seamy side, and thus our great humorists are also frequently masters of pathos. Humour and pathos are not distinct entities, but different ways of looking at the

same incongruities. Much in life indeed presents a double aspect, as John Bunyan has quaintly noted: "Some things are of that nature as to make one's fancy chuckle while his heart doth ache."

Humour is often shot with pathos. Thus, many humorists have what may be called, "rainbow sympathies," where the smiles constantly irradiate the tears. Laughter and tears, indeed, lie closely together, and frequently invade each other's territory. Where the gift of humour is combined with great intellectual power, as in the case of George Eliot, it often shows itself in the form of wit. Wit is an intellectual brother to humour; it aims at discovering fanciful analogies and unexpected congruities; hence it voices itself in epigrams and aphorisms. Humour revels in incongruities; 'tis a wild, mad-cap sprite, and though often seen cheek by jowl with its sedate brother, Wit, it just as often dashes off on its own account, and entertains great affection for a young lady, called Nonsense, with whom Wit is scarcely on speaking terms.

Dickens, though a superb humorist, is seldom witty. George Eliot shone in both respects, more particularly in the latter; for she somewhat lacked the spontaneous flow of animal spirits, the go and exuberance usually associated with humour. Inferior to Dickens in the exuberance of his imagination, she far surpassed him in subtlety and in that tragic humour which lies at the heart of things. Humour, like music, utters varying sounds, from the reed-like notes of fantasy to the deep, rich bass of philosophy; and being an attitude of mind, it may express itself in some brilliant criticism of life by Dorothea, or rest content by mentioning the bursting of the waistcoat buttons of Mr. Watkins Tottle.

As time went by, the brooding melancholy in George Eliot's temperament gradually darkened the pages of her writings, until in her last book, *Theophrastus Such*, we find this significant reflection of life. "Take a large enough area of human life, and all comedy melts into tragedy, like the fool's part by the

side of Lear. The comedy sinks to an accessory, and if there are loud laughs, they seem a convulsive transition from sobs; or if the comedy is touched with a gentle lovingness, the panoramic scene is one where

. . . 'Sadness is a kind of mirth  
So mingled as if mirth did make us sad,  
And sadness merry.'"

The humorous method of George Eliot is twofold. In the first place it is *dramatic*. The scenes where Mrs. Poyser states her views about men and matters, where the Dodsons display their peculiar characteristics, and where the famous "Rainbow" affinities discourse on ghosts, may be instanced as illustrations of dramatic humour. Although in this direction she never rivalled the prodigal inventiveness of Dickens and the light touch of Thackeray, yet she achieved a success which at one time neither she herself nor her friends would have thought possible. Before she essayed fiction-writing, G. H. Lewes expressed his doubts as to whether she would ever be successful in the art of dramatic presentation, and she herself said: "I always thought I was deficient in dramatic power, both of construction and dialogue."

These fears were largely set at rest by the appearance of the *Scenes of Clerical Life*, whilst *Adam Bede* entirely disposed of them. Take for example where at the famous harvest-supper Bartle Massey is speaking of Dinah Morris:

"I daresay she is like the rest of the women, thinks two and two will make five, if she cries and bothers enough about it."

"Aye, aye," said Mrs. Poyser, "one 'ud think to hear some people talk as the men war cute enough to count a bag of corn in a week wi only smelling at it. They can see through a barn door, they can. P'raps that's the reason they can see so little o' this side on't."

Martin Poyser shook with delighted laughter and



winked at Adam, as much as to say the schoolmaster was in for it now.

"Ah!" said Bartle sneeringly, "the women are quick enough, they're quick enough. They know the rights of a story before they hear it, and can tell a man what his thoughts are before he knows them himself."

"Like enough," said Mrs. Poyser, "for the men are so slow, their thoughts overrun them, and they can only catch them by the tail. I can count a stocking top while a man is getting his tongue ready; and when he outs wi' his speech at last, there's little broth to be made on't. It's yer dead chicks takes the longest hatching. However, I'm not denying the women are foolish. God Almighty made 'em to match the men."

"Match," said Bartle; "aye, as vinegar matches one's teeth. If a man says a word his wife will match it with a contradiction. If he's a mind for hot meat, his wife will match it with cold bacon. If he laughs, she'll match him with whimpering. She is such a match as the horse-fly is to the horse. She's got the right venom to sting him with."

"Yes," said Mrs. Poyser, "I know what the men like. A poor soft as 'ud simper at 'em like the picture of the sun, whether they did right or wrong, an' say thank you for a kick, and pretend she didna know which end she stood uppermost till her husband told her. That's what a man wants in a wife mostly, he wants to make sure o' one fool as 'ull tell him he's wise. But there's some men can do wi'out that—they think so much o' themselves a'ready an' that's how it is there's old bachelors."

"Come, Craig," said Mr. Poyser jocosely, "you mun get married pretty quick, else you'll be set down for an old bachelor; an' you see what the women will think on you."

"Well," said Mr. Craig, willing to conciliate Mrs. Poyser, and setting a high value on his own compliments, "I like a cleverish woman—a woman o' sperrit—a managing woman."

"You're out there, Craig," said Bartle drily, "you judge o' your garden stuff on a better plan than that. You don't value your peas for their roots, or your carrots for their flowers. Now that's the way you should choose women; their cleverness 'll never come to much; but they make excellent simpletons, ripe and strong-flavoured."

"What dost say to that?" said Mr. Poyser, throwing himself back and looking merrily at his wife.

"Say," answered Mrs. Poyser, with a dangerous fire kindling in her eye; "why I say as some folk are like clocks as run on strikin', not to tell you the time o' day, but because there's summat wrong i' ther inside."

In the above quotation the humour is not entirely dramatic, but rather a combination of the dramatic and reflective. For in the epigrams of Mrs. Poyser there are traces of the author's tendency to philosophize. In *The Mill on the Floss*, however, may be found examples of pure dramatic humour. And by dramatic humour I mean the faculty which enables an author to identify him or herself with the character presented, and whilst becoming for the nonce the mouthpiece of certain incongruous sentiments, to show rather by the faithfulness of the delineation than by any self-made comments, the humour of it all. It follows, then, that *The Mill on the Floss*, though less witty than its predecessor, is on the whole more humorous, since wit favours the reflective, and humour the dramatic style of literary presentation.

Certainly we miss Mrs. Poyser and Bartle Massey, with their pungent epigrams and smart repartees, but the three aunts, abounding in amusing idiosyncrasies, are more laughter-provoking, since humour pure and simple, though it appeals less to the intellect than does wit, is certainly more provocative of mirth. Take, for instance, that delightful description of Aunt Pullet and the famous new bonnet.

"Mrs. Gray has sent home my new bonnet, Bessy,"

said Mrs. Pullet in a pathetic tone, as Mrs. Tulliver adjusted her cap.

"Has she, sister?" said Mrs. Tulliver, with an air of much interest, "and how do you like it?"

"It's apt to make a mess with clothes, taking them out and putting them in again," said Mrs. Pullet, drawing a bunch of keys from her pocket, and looking at them earnestly. "But it ud be a pity for you to go away without seeing it; there's no knowing what may happen."

Mrs. Pullet shook her head slowly at this last serious consideration, which determined her to single out a particular key.

"I'm afraid it'll be troublesome for you getting it out, sister," said Mrs. Tulliver; "but I should like to see what sort of a crown she's made for you."

Mrs. Pullet arose with a melancholy air, and unlocked one wing of a very bright wardrobe, where you may have hastily supposed she would find a new bonnet. Not at all! Such a supposition could only have arisen from a too superficial acquaintance with the habits of the Dodson family. In this wardrobe Mrs. Pullet was seeking something small enough to be hidden among layers of linen. It was a door key.

"You must come with me into the best room," said Mrs. Pullet.

"May the children come too, sister?" enquired Mrs. Tulliver, who saw that Maggie and Lucy were looking rather eager.

"Well," said Aunt Pullet reflectively, "it'll p'raps be safer for them to come. They'll be touching something if we leave them behind."

Thence they proceed in solemn procession to a darkened room, where the outer light entering feebly, showed what looked like the corpses of furniture in white shrouds. Everything that was not shrouded stood with its legs upwards. Even more solemn was the elaborate ceremony of uncovering the bonnet. So solemn and awe-inspiring indeed is the rite of taking off the wrappers of silver paper, that the sight of

the bonnet itself proved a kind of anti-climax to poor Maggie, who had expected a sight of a more supernatural kind. Mrs. Tulliver, however, rises to the full impressiveness of the occasion. Listen to her.

She looked all round in silence for some moments, and then said emphatically:

"Well, sister, I'll never speak against the full crowns again!"

It was a great concession, and Mrs. Pullet felt it. She felt something was due to it.

"You'd like to see it on, sister?" she said sadly; "I'll open the shutter a bit further."

"Well, if you don't mind taking off your cap, sister," said Mrs. Tulliver.

Mrs. Pullet took off her cap, displaying the brown silk scalp with a jutting promontory of curls which was common to the more mature and judicious women of those times, and placing the bonnet on her head, turned slowly round, like a draper's lay figure, that Mrs. Tulliver might miss no point of view.

"I've sometimes thought there's a loop too much ribbon on this left side, sister; what do you think?" said Mrs. Pullet.

Mrs. Tulliver looked earnestly at the point indicated, and turned her head on one side.

"Well, I think it's best as it is. If you meddle with it, sister, you might repent."

"That's true, sister," said Aunt Pullet, taking off the bonnet and looking at it contemplatively. "Ah!" she said, at last, "I may never wear it twice, sister; who knows?"

"Don't talk of that, sister," answered Mrs. Tulliver. "I hope you'll have your health this summer."

"Ah, but there may come a death in the family, as there did soon after I got my green silk satin bonnet. Cousin Abbot may go, and we can't think of wearing crape less nor half a year for him."

"That *would* be unlucky," said Mrs. Tulliver, entering thoroughly into the possibility of an inopportune decease; "there's never so much pleasure in wearing a



bonnet the second year—especially when the crowns are so changeable, never two summers alike.”

“Ah, it’s the way of this world,” said Mrs. Pullet, returning the bonnet to the wardrobe, and locking it up.”

It is not, however, upon the dramatic, but on the reflective side that George Eliot commands most attention as a humorist. In a suggestive essay on Carlyle, the American transcendentalist, Thoreau, when speaking anent the humour of the Chelsea sage, remarks, “It is not to be disposed of by laughter and smiles merely, it gets too serious for that; only they may laugh who are not hit by it. His humour is always subordinate to a serious purpose.”

This, while certainly true of Carlyle, is also to a large extent applicable to George Eliot. This writer was more than a close observer, she was a philosopher; she generalized from the results of her observations, and in the ironical wit which scintillates in all her writings, more particularly in the writings after *Felix Holt*, we can trace the constant presence of the reflective humorist. But even so early as the *Scenes of Clerical Life* there are traces of philosophic humour. Mrs. Linnet, one of the characters in *Janet’s Repentance*, formulates a very practical philosophy when she observes:

“I have nothing to say against her piety, my dear, but I know very well I shouldn’t like her to cook my vittles. When a man comes in hungry and tired, piety won’t feed him. Hard carrots ’ll lie heavy on his stomach, piety or no piety. I called in one day, when she was dishin’ up Mr. Tryan’s dinner, and I could see the potatoes was as watery as watery. It’s right enough to be speritial—I am no enemy to that; but I like my potatoes mealy. I don’t see as anybody ’ll go to heaven sooner for not digestin’ their dinner, providing they don’t die sooner, and mayhap Mr. Tryan will, poor dear man!”

But it is in *Middlemarch*, and in a lesser degree *Daniel Deronda*, that the irony of George Eliot finds

the aptest expression, and the flavour of bitterness will commend the humour all the more to some palates. Take, for instance, such passages as these: "Kind Providence furnishes the limpest personality with a little gum or starch in the form of tradition."

"There are answers which, in turning away wrath, only send it to the other end of the room."

"Mr. Bulstrode had a deferential, bending attitude, in listening, and an apparently fixed attentiveness in his eyes, which made those persons who thought themselves worth hearing infer that he was seeking the utmost improvement from their discourse. Others, who expected to make no great figure, disliked this kind of moral lantern turned on them. If you are not proud of your cellar, there is no thrill of satisfaction in seeing your guest hold up his wineglass to the light and look judicial. Such joy is reserved for conscious merit."

"We sit up at night to read about St. Francis or Oliver Cromwell, but whether we should be glad for any one like them to call on us next morning, still more to reveal himself as a new relation, is quite another affair."

And so one might quote passage after passage, where Wisdom borrows the Jester's bow, and drives home her arrows none the less unerringly because the darts are so often tipped with sarcasm. With all her irony, however, George Eliot is never cynical; her sympathies were too warm to allow of that. The tenderness in her nature, the intense sensitiveness to suffering of any kind, and the melancholy cast of temperament, all combined to turn her attention to a mournful view of the seamy side of things. Here again, just as in humour, she delineated pathos on the dramatic as well as on the reflective side, with the same tendency to use more frequently the reflective attitude. On the dramatic side both humour and pathos lose unavoidably by being quoted away from the context. The humour or the pathos lies so much in the relation of certain scenes to one another.

The *Scenes of Clerical Life* are full of illustrations; as for instance the touching death scene of Milly Barton, or the romance of Mr. Gilfil. Then the description of Hetty's flight in *Adam Bede*, and the fate of Maggie and Tom in *The Mill on the Floss*, are further examples. Indeed every book provides many examples. One of the most delicate pieces of pathetic writing is found in *Romola*: the scene in which Tito shows his real character to his noble wife Romola, and in laying bare his selfishness kills the love that the high-souled Florentine bore him, is most subtly drawn.

"Romola sat silent and motionless. She could not blind herself to the direction in which Tito's words pointed. He wanted to persuade her that they might get the library (her father's) deposited in some monastery, or take some other means to rid themselves of a task and of a tie to Florence; and she was determined never to submit her mind to his judgment, on this question of duty to her father. She was inwardly prepared to encounter any sort of pain in resistance. But the determination was kept latent in these first moments by the heart-crushing sense that now at last she and Tito must be confessedly divided in their wishes. He was glad of her silence, for, much as he had feared the strength of her feeling, it was impossible for him, shut up in the narrowness that hedges in all merely clever unimpassioned men, not to overestimate the persuasiveness of his own judgment. His conduct did not look ugly to himself, and his imagination did not suffice to show him exactly how it would look to Romola."

\* \* \* \* \*

"As that fluent talk fell on her ears, there was a rising contempt within her, which only made her more conscious of her bruised, despairing love, her love for the Tito she had married and believed in."

Turning from the dramatic to the reflective side,

the task of selection is a simple one; for aphorisms and apothegms are eminently quotable, and lack the elusive, atmospheric character peculiar to dramatic presentations of pathos. One or two quotations will suffice.

"In every parting there is the image of death.

"Oh, the anguish of that thought, that we can never atone to our dead for the stinted affection we gave them; for the light answers we returned to their complaints or their pleadings; for the little reverence we showed for the sacred human soul that lived so close to us, and was the divinest thing God had given us to know."

"It is with men as with trees, if you lop off their finest branches into which they were pouring their young life-juice, the wounds will be healed over with some rough boss, some odd excrescence, and what might have been a grand tree, expanding into liberal shade, is but a whimsical, mis-shapen trunk. Many an irritating fault, many an unlovely oddity, has come of a hard sorrow, which has crushed and maimed the nature just when it was expanding into plenteous beauty; and the trivial, erring life which we visit with our harsh blame, may be but the unsteady motion of a man whose best limb is withered."

Some of Mrs. Poyser's epigrams have the ring of true pathos about them, as for instance when she says:

"I often think it's wi' the old folks as wi' the babbies, they're satisfied wi' looking, no matter what they're looking at. It's God Almighty's way of quieting them before they go to sleep."

Or again, this: "It's poor work, allus setting the dead up above the livin'; we shall all on us be dead some time, I reckon; it 'ud be better if folks 'ud make much on us beforehand, instead o' beginnin' when we're gone. It's but little good you'll do watering the last year's crop."

The next point to be considered in discussing George Eliot's position as a literary artist, is her power of characterization.



Some writers have excelled in the analysis of character, and in disentangling the skein of human motives. Others have excelled in presenting the men and women of their creation with a few bold strokes of the pen, and allowing them to speak for themselves. George Eliot combined both qualifications, though her obvious leaning is to the former method.

It is not surprising that the *Scenes of Clerical Life* created such a sensation when they appeared, and should have called forth the admiration of men like Dickens, Carlyle, George H. Lewes and Froude; for, as studies of provincial life and character, they are remarkable, even apart from the fact that they represent the first attempt in fiction of their writer. Much in these *Scenes* was drawn from actual experience. Shepperton Church in *Amos Barton* was a church in a suburb of Nuneaton, where Mary Ann Evans (George Eliot) was baptized, and both the Reverend Amos Barton and his wife Milly were sketches from real life. These two characters are admirably drawn. Amos, a clergyman of the Evangelical type, has been sensibly affected by the influence of the then powerful Tractarian Movement. "He was like," says the author, "an onion that has been rubbed with spices—the strong original odour was blended with something new and foreign. The Low Church onion still offended High Church nostrils, and the new spice was unwelcome to the palate of the genuine onion eater."

The pathetic description of the death of Mrs. Barton is written with a force and restraint that argued well for the writer's reputation as a sympathetic artist. The literary expression of true pathos demands artistic restraint. Already we note some of those pregnant sayings, those flashes of psychological insight, which George Eliot subsequently poured forth in such delightful abundance to enrich our aphoristic literature. Such, for instance, from *Mr. Gilfil's Love Story*:

"Human longings are perversely obstinate, and to the man whose mouth is watering for a peach it is of no use to offer the largest vegetable marrow."

"Animals are such agreeable friends, they ask no questions, they pass no criticisms."

In *Janet's Repentance*, life at Milby, a dingy town, "with a strong smell of tanning up one street, and a great shaking of hand-looms up another," is described with a fidelity and vividness no less humorous than true. Indeed, we can see in this story a forecast of that epic of provincial life which the author wrote when in the zenith of her powers, namely *Middlemarch*. Here, for instance, is a picture of church and dissent at Milby.

"The standard of morality at Milby was not inconveniently high in those good old times, and an ingenuous vice or two was what every man expected of his neighbour. Old Mr. Crew, the curate, for example, was allowed to enjoy his avarice in comfort, and his flock liked him all the better for having scraped together a large fortune out of his school and curacy. The fact that he read nothing at all now, and that his mind seemed absorbed in the commonest matters, was doubtless due to his having exhausted the resources of erudition earlier in life. This and such like things were the dents and disfigurements on an old family tankard, which no one would like to part with for a smarter piece of plate from Birmingham. The parishioners saw no reason at all why it should be desirable to venerate the parson or any one else; they were much more comfortable to look down a little on their fellow creatures. Even the dissent in Milby was then of a lax and indifferent kind. The doctrine of adult baptism struggling under a heavy load of debt had let off half its chapel area as a ribbon shop, and Methodism was only to be detected as you detect curious larvæ by diligent search in dirty corners. The Independents were the only dissenters of whose existence Milby gentility was at all conscious, and it had a vague idea that the salient points of their creed were prayer without book, red brick and hypocrisy. Once on a time, several Church families attended

Salem chapel, but these lax Episcopalians were chiefly tradespeople, who held that, inasmuch as Congregationalism consumed candles, it ought to be supported."

No less admirable is the description of the representatives of the medical profession. From Mr. Pilgrim, who looked with tolerance on all shades of religious opinion that did not include belief in cures by miracle, and who being persuaded that the evil principle in the human system was plethora, made war against it with cupping, blistering, and cathartics, to Mr. Pratt, who elegantly referred all diseases to debility, and with a proper contempt for symptomatic treatment went to the root of the matter with port wine and bark. The picture of the earnest Evangelical clergyman, Mr. Tryan, is interesting, quite apart from its artistic merit.

Scarcely any type of religious thought was more foreign to George Eliot's mature intellectual sympathies, warmly as she sympathised with it in her enthusiastic youth; and yet her treatment of this cleric shows the tender insight and large-heartedness of the really great writer. Where Dickens gives us the typified faults of school—a Stiggins or a Chadband—the creator of Mr. Tryan gives us a *man*:

"'One of the Evangelical clergy, a disciple of Venn,' says the critic from his bird's eye station, 'not a remarkable specimen, the anatomy and habits of his species have been determined long ago.' Yet surely the only knowledge of our fellow-man is that which enables us to feel with him, which gives us a fine ear for the heart pulses that are beating under the mere clothes of circumstances and opinion; our subtlest analysis of schools and sect must miss the essential truth, unless it be lit up by the love that sees in all forms of human thought and work the life and death struggles of separate human beings."

This story, like *Amos Barton*, is full of early recollections, and many of the incidents narrated are based on actual occurrences.



*Scenes of Clerical Life* were published in 1858, and in February, 1859, *Adam Bede* made its appearance. The popularity of this early work is largely due to the number of brilliant character sketches that crowd into its pages. The serious theme, with Hetty Sorrel as the central figure, is cleverly relieved by the delightful sallies of Mrs. Poyser, Mrs. Bede, and Bartle Massey. The happy ending, detailing the marriage of Adam and Dinah Morris, is doubtless another reason for its popularity, not to mention the somewhat theatrical reprieve of the unhappy Hetty.

The fascination which most readers feel for *The Mill on the Floss* is due to the personal element in the book. We are drawn towards it in the same way as we are towards *David Copperfield*, and feel that much of the novel is written with the author's own life blood. That it is open to criticism as a story may be admitted; none the less a book that has given us such profound psychological studies as Maggie and Tom Tulliver, Philip Wakem and the inimitable aunts, must take its rank among the masterpieces of English fiction.

In *Silas Marner*, despite its great artistic merit (it is an exquisite piece of miniature painting, but has the defects as well as the merits of miniature studies), the author has not the same opportunities as on larger canvases to give her powers of character analysis full play. The weaver himself is a fine conception, and admirably worked out, but some of the other characters lack that brilliancy of conception and subtlety of treatment usually characteristic of the author's creations. The sketch of Mrs. Macey is good, but too reminiscent of Mrs. Poyser. Eppie is a charming little girl, but an uninteresting young woman. Godfrey Cass is a somewhat tentative sketch of a type that the author afterwards depicted more successfully in the shape of Harold Transom, whilst his wife Nancy, though she promises well, suggests that her creator was in two minds as to what to make her, and the result is a blurred piece of portraiture.



*Romola* has met with much adverse criticism. No doubt the elaborate historical background is a dubious artistic ornament, but as a study in character it can scarcely be too highly appraised. George Eliot's male characters are not always convincing, but there are two prominent exceptions, Tom Tulliver and Tito. Of the two, Tito, as well as being the most ambitious, is, perhaps, the finer piece of portraiture, whilst Savonarola and the two women who affected Tito's life, Romola and Tessa, are admirable character studies. When the brilliant epicurean Tito takes his first step in the wrong direction, the writer comments on the fact with exquisite appreciation of the character she is delineating.

"The contamination of deeds often lies less in the commission than in the consequent adjustment of our desires, the enlistment of our self-interest on the side of falsity."

Apart from its psychological value, which is very great, the novel is by no means on a level with its predecessors. As a story the action is far too slow, whilst the humour that relieves the book seems often forced and academic.

In *Felix Holt*, the story of the early days of political reform, George Eliot adopts a lighter style. Like all her novels, *Felix Holt* bears the imprint of careful study. The political background is filled in with remarkable skill, and displays how closely the writer had studied the social and political tone of the period. There is a good deal of the old humour, more fitful perhaps, and less fresh than in the two first books, but still much that delights. Some very clever bits of characterization also (notably Rufus and Esther Lyon), and one of George Eliot's rare happy endings are here; but it cannot rank with *Adam Bede* or *The Mill on the Floss*. The attempt at an elaborate plot does not display the writer to full advantage. Here she trenches on the territory of Wilkie Collins and Miss Braddon without their mechanical skill, for as a story-teller pure and simple George Eliot by no means excelled.

Despite the many excellencies of the book it lacks that magnetic charm which enchants the reader of *Adam Bede* and *The Mill on the Floss*. It is neither a first-rate sensational story, nor a first-rate study of character. In trying to combine the two types of novel writing, she handicaps her own genius. The occasional flashes of brilliance only show up more plainly the weak parts of the book.

*Felix Holt* appeared in 1866, three years after *Romola*, and it was not until 1871 that the next novel, *Middlemarch*, appeared, the interval having been occupied with only moderately successful attempts in verse and drama. This story of provincial life is a monumental work, and contains sufficient material for two or three ordinary novels. There are, indeed, two distinct themes running through the book, that of the modern St. Theresa, Dorothea Brooke, with her noble aspirations and pathetic disillusionments, and the story of Lydgate and Rosamund. Undoubtedly it is the most powerful of her books; nothing more exquisitely finished can be found in any of her stories than the character studies in this novel. Viewed as a work of art it is not altogether a success; the breadth of the canvas and the multiplicity of figures draw our interest from one theme to another, from this set of characters to that, and so prevent us concentrating our full attention and sustaining our interest in any particular set. Our interest in the ambitious, and on the whole fine-minded Lydgate, lessens our interest in the misfortunes of Dorothea; and again, the sympathy we feel for the domestic tragedy of the poor doctor prevents our paying full justice to the delicately drawn episodes that collect round Fred Vincey and Mary Garth. In this book we are aware of the increasing seriousness of tone that had been slowly but surely marking the author's novels. Painfully alive to the jarring discords of life, her humour has become more caustic, and her wit more bitter. Her pictures of provincial life have more gray in their composition than formerly, and even the sunshine is colder and more subdued. But in

none of her books has the writer been happier in her psychology, or more felicitous in her touches. Thus, as an example, take this anent Dorothea's early enthusiasm for the learned pedant, Casaubon :

"Dorothea filled up all blanks with unmanifested perfection, interpreting them as she interpreted the works of Providence, and accounting for seeming discords by her own deafness to the higher harmonies. And there are many blanks left in the weeks of courtship which a loving faith fills up with happy assurance."

Again this, "There are natures in which, if they love us, we are conscious of having a sort of baptism and consecration. They bind us over to rectitude and purity by their pure belief about us, and our sins become that worst kind of sacrilege which tears down the invisible altar of trust."

The dialogue in this book is saturated with that fine dramatic instinct which is often more satisfactory than the most elaborate analysis. Here is a fragment of conversation between Fred Vincey and Mary Garth:—

*Fred* : "I don't see how a man is to be good for much unless he has some one woman to love him dearly."

*Mary* : "I think the goodness should come before he expects that."

*Fred* : "You know better, Mary ; women don't love men for their goodness."

*Mary* : "Perhaps not, but if they love them they never think them bad."

*Middlemarch* is the high water mark of George Eliot's genius as a writer and thinker. It is like some fine Alpine peak, that rears itself above its fellows : we may be more attracted in one way by the greener slopes and more graceful undulations of the smaller hills that surround it, and may criticise its symmetrical imperfections and its comparative ruggedness, but it has a majesty that atones for any want of grace, and on its summit we find ourselves in a keen, bracing atmosphere of lofty thought, more

healthful perhaps than the genial breezes that meet the climber of the lesser heights.

*Daniel Deronda*, published in 1876—four years after *Middlemarch*—necessarily labours under the disadvantage of comparison with its predecessor; and because George Eliot found herself unable to write another masterpiece she has, I think, been very often too severely criticised for this her last novel. Although laboured in parts, and distinctly unequal in artistic merit, yet a novel that has enriched our portrait gallery of fiction with such striking studies as Grandcourt and Gwendolen Harleth deserves some measure of grateful remembrance.

Before leaving the characterizations of George Eliot, it may be well to give rather closer attention to a few of the author's most noteworthy creations—Arthur Donnithorne, Hetty Sorrel, Rosamond Vincey, Maggie Tulliver, and Dorothea Brooke.

In the first place, Arthur Donnithorne. On our first introduction to him the author comments, "No young man could confess his faults more candidly. Candour was one of his favourite virtues; and how can a man's candour be seen in all its lustre unless he has a few failings to talk of? He had an agreeable confidence that his faults were all of the generous kind—impetuous, warm-blooded, leonine, never crawling or crafty. It was not possible for Arthur Donnithorne to do anything mean, dastardly, or cruel. "No, I'm a devil of a fellow for getting myself into a hobble," quoth he, "but I always take care the load shall fall on my own shoulders."

"Unhappily," observes George Eliot dryly, "there is no inherent poetical justice in hobbles, and they will sometimes obstinately refuse to inflict their worst consequences on the prime offender, in spite of his loudly-expressed wish." This is the easy-going, amiable youth who meets the pretty Hetty. Of course he cannot help being agreeable—only a brute would be otherwise with a girl of seventeen, whose beauty had already driven bucolic lovers to distraction;



and so he plays with fire, and excuses himself with that subtle ingenuity with which we usually excuse equivocal actions, particularly when they are pleasant. Suddenly he discovers that his attraction towards Hetty is increasing, and resolves that he will not see her again. After making this heroic resolution, he gives himself up to thinking "how immensely agreeable it would be if circumstances were different! He wondered if the dear little thing were thinking of him too—twenty to one she was! How beautiful her eyes were! He would like to satisfy his soul for a day with looking at them; and he *must* see her again, he must see her, simply to remove any false impression from her mind about his manner to her just now. He would behave in a quiet, kind way to her, just to prevent her from having her head full of wrong fancies. Yes, that would be the best thing to do."

Only a master-hand could have described the gradual drifting of the young squire towards the rapids; the easy confidence in his own safety, and the disagreeable shock to his selfishness when the catastrophe arrives. Feebly he stammers of reparation, and has to face the bitter truth wrung from the agonised heart of Adam Bede, "There's a sort of wrong can never be made up for."

Hetty Sorrel and Rosamond Vincey are studies on the same theme. "No one," says Mr. Hutton, "has ever so drawn the cruelty that springs from pure thinness and shallowness of nature, and yet given that cruelty so delicate and feminine an embodiment, as George Eliot in her marvellous picture of Rosamond." Rosamond is very much what Hetty might have been under slightly different circumstances; the only difference between them is a shade more obstinacy and a trifle more shrewdness in Rosamond. Hetty's shallowness recoiled upon her life with terrible results; but in Rosamond's case, we feel that her small nature inflicted more agony upon others, notably her husband Lydgate, than she could ever feel herself.

There is nothing in English fiction more marvel-

lously subtle that the description of Hetty, which, whilst conveying the impression of her distracting beauty, hints at the shallowness of her disposition; and this not didactically, but with a half-humorous, half-pathetic reluctance infinitely more convincing.

"Ah! what a prize," says the author, like a Greek chorus, "the man gets who wins a sweet bride like Hetty! How the men envy him who come to the wedding breakfast, and see her hanging on his arm in her white lace and orange blossoms! Her heart must be as soft, her temper just as free from angles, her character just as pliant. If anything ever goes wrong, it must be the husband's fault there; he can make her what he likes. And the lover himself thinks so too. The little darling is so fond of him, her little vanities are so bewitching, he wouldn't consent to her being a bit wiser; those kittenish glances and movements are just what one wants to make one's hearth a paradise. Every man under such circumstances is conscious of being a great physiognomist. Nature, he knows, has a language of her own, which she uses with strict veracity, and he considers himself an adept at the language. Nature has written out his bride's character for him in those exquisite lines of cheek and lip and chin; those eyelids, delicate as petals; those long lashes, curved like the stamens of flowers; and in the dark, liquid depths of those wonderful eyes. It is a marriage such as they made in the Golden Age, when the men were all wise and majestic, and the women all lovely and loving. It was very much in this way that Adam Bede thought about Hetty, only he put his thoughts into different words; and before you despise Adam as deficient in penetration, ask yourself if you ever could, without hard, head-breaking demonstration, believe evil of the one supremely pretty woman who has bewitched you? No, people who love downy peaches are apt not to think of the stone, and sometimes jar their teeth terribly against it. . . . Nature has her language, and she is not un-  
veracious. But we do not know all the intricacies of

her syntax just yet, and in a hasty reading we may happen to extract the very opposite of her meaning."

Perhaps the most attractive and lovable of George Eliot's heroines is Maggie Tulliver; with her strong affections, her warm impulsiveness, her unreasoning wilfulness, she is the most human of them all. Governed by feeling rather than thinking, she has none the less a fine innate nobility of character that prevents her from doing any great wrong, and makes her bitterly remorseful after lapsing into small mistakes.

"Oh, life is difficult, very difficult!" she exclaims, when Stephen tempts her to fly with him. "If it did not make duties for us before love comes, that would be a sign that two people ought to belong to each other. But I see, I feel, it is not so now. There are things we must renounce in life; some of us must renounce love. Many things are dark and difficult to me, but I see one thing quite clearly—that I must not, cannot, seek my own happiness by sacrificing others."

Maggie, in her restless life, is always yearning for some ideal happiness. "I was never satisfied," she cries, "with a little of anything. That is why it is better for me to do without earthly happiness altogether. I never felt that I had enough music—I wanted more instruments playing together; I wanted voices to be fuller and deeper." A passage like this has more than a literary interest; it has a personal significance. To all acquainted with the author it must read like a passage of autobiography.

Romola and Dorothea have not quite the same charm about them such as surrounded Maggie, perhaps partly because we knew Maggie from a small child, and have watched her knock about and then poultice her old wooden doll, or go hand in hand with her brother Tom on fishing expeditions, implicitly believing his statement that "worms couldn't feel"; partly also, however, because there is so much in the description of Maggie that reads like passionate tran-



scripts from personal experience. Dorothea Brooke, in *Middlemarch* though lacking Maggie's charm, is a most interesting and pathetic creation, with her misplaced enthusiasms, her anxious sympathy, her unsatisfied ideals. It is noteworthy how George Eliot insists, in her finest characterization, on the pathetic disparity between promise and performance. "Her full nature," says the author, "was like that river of which Alexander broke the strength, and spent itself in channels which had no great name on the earth. But the effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive, for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs."

## II

According to Mazzini, duty is the mainspring of a healthful society, and ought to be the common collective faith. "Society based upon duty," says he, "would not be compelled to have recourse to force; but duty once admitted as the rule excludes the possibility of struggle, and, by rendering the individual subject to the general aim, it cuts at the root of those evils which right is unable to prevent, and only affects to cure."

Just as the Italian patriot insisted on duty as the vital force in healthy society, so did George Eliot insist upon duty as the one principle to which the individual should subordinate his life. The keynote of George Eliot's ethical teaching lies in the single word "duty"; and despite the undeniable pessimism with which the philosophy of this great novelist is charged, despite the gentle hopelessness of her religious convictions, in this message she never faltered.

In Mr. Myers' well-known Essay on George Eliot, he calls to mind how one day he was walking with the



authoress, when she took as the text of her conversation the three words which have been so often used as the inspiring trumpet calls of men—the words, “God,” “Immortality,” “Duty.” She “declared with terrible earnestness how inconceivable was the first, how unbelievable was the second, and yet how peremptory and absolute the third.”

In her very first volume of stories she strikes the note which sounds, with a fine though melancholy cadence, throughout all her subsequent writings. Says she: “The idea of duty—that recognition of something to live for beyond the mere satisfaction of self—is to the moral life what the addition of a great central ganglion is to animal life. No man can begin to mould himself on a faith or an idea without rising to a higher order of experience; a principle of subordination, of self-mastery, has been introduced into his nature. He is no longer a mere bundle of impressions, desires, and impulses.”

But she fully recognises—few writers have done so with more intensity—the temptations that beset the path of duty. In *The Mill on the Floss*, with the lovable and impetuous Maggie as the central figure, the authoress reminds her readers “It is the moment when our resolution seems about to become irrevocable, when the fatal iron gates are about to close upon us, that tests our strength; then after hours of clear reasoning and firm conviction we snatch at any sophistry that will nullify our last struggles and bring us a defeat that we love better than victory.”

In the entire range of English fiction there are few scenes more pathetic than the hard struggle which poor Maggie undergoes when she realizes that her love for Stephen Guest will bring so much bitterness into the lives of others. An accident has thrown Stephen and Maggie together: the strong tide on the Floss which set the boat drifting symbolises the strong tide of passion that carried these two human souls nearer one another; and yet, despite all her love for Stephen, and all Stephen’s frenzied protestations, she will not

take the step which means happiness for herself and misery for others.

"We can't choose happiness either for ourselves or for another, we can't tell where that will lie," she moans; "we can only choose whether we will indulge ourselves in the present moment, or whether we will renounce that for the sake of obeying the Divine voice within us, for the sake of being true to all the motives that sanctify our lives. I know this belief is hard, it has slipped away from me again and again, but I have felt that if I let it go for ever I should have no light through the darkness of this life."

Felix Holt, the sturdy, blunt-spoken Radical, expresses thus his belief in instinctive duty: "The only failure a man ought to fear is failure in cleaving to the purpose which he sees to be best: as to just the amount of result he may see from his particular work—that's a tremendous uncertainty: the Universe has not been arranged for the gratification of his feelings. As long as a man sees and believes in some great good, he'll prefer working towards that in the way he's best fit for, come what may. I put effects at their minimum, but I'd rather have the minimum effect if it is of the sort I care for, than the maximum effect I don't care for."

But if George Eliot insisted so strongly on the necessity of duty, although the interpreter of the

"Stern daughter of the voice of God,  
Oh duty, if that name thou love,  
Who art a light to guide, a rod  
To check the erring and reprove,"

there is no harsh, unfeeling asceticism in her ethical teaching, for she has equally and unfailingly hymned the sanctifying influence of sympathy, and sympathy may be described as the vestal whose task it is to keep alight the lamp of duty. Or, to change the simile, our ideals owe the clearness of their light to duty, the warmth of their radiance to sympathy.

It has been said, not without reason, that George

Eliot's great intellectual gifts often mar rather than increase the value of her work as an artist. But it would be impossible to say that she put intellect before feeling in her ethical teaching; on the contrary, she strenuously taught that though wisdom may give foresight, love alone grants insight. She had the greatest contempt for the merely clever prudential man; nature, according to her, never makes men who are at once energetically sympathetic and minutely calculating, and the men of maxims, she held, are rightly distrusted inasmuch as they discern not. "The mysterious complexity of life is not to be embraced by maxims, and to lace ourselves up in formulas of that sort is to repress all the divine promptings and inspirations that spread from growing insight and sympathy." Sympathy, however, not only acts as the interpreter of human life, but is calculated to help and ennoble the object of the sympathy. "Those who trust us educate us."

So far we have noted two salient characteristics in George Eliot's teaching. A third important one yet remains to be noted; the text of it may be found in a remark uttered by one of her characters: "Our deeds are fetters we forge ourselves," which is an echo of an Elizabethan poet. Believing as our author did in individual free will, she has insisted again and again upon the inexorable law of retribution. All wrongdoing will sooner or later recoil, boomerang-like, upon the evil-doer. Sometimes conscience will give the alarm; at other times the reproach of others first awakens the soul to the realisation that what it has written it has written.

In the stories of Arthur Donnithorne and Hetty Sorrel, of Godfrey Case and his misfortune, of Tito and his treachery, of Mrs. Transom and Lawyer Jermyn, of Bulstrode and his tormentor, and of Gwen-dolen Harleth's fatal mistake, in one and all the sinister influence of retribution is traced, with all its terrible and accumulating consequences. And it would be doubtful whether any finer sermons could be



found on the text, "The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small," than are supplied by these themes. Donnithorne was an amiable, easy-going young man, whose conscience was not fine enough of itself to give him much inconvenience, but he was highly sensitive to the opinion of others, and when rude people gave rough names to his action, then Nemesis began her work.

The doom of Tito in *Romola* is more tragic than that of Donnithorne; in Tito we see all the consequences of a defective moral sense. This young Greek is a cultured, refined, and sensitive man, with much personal ambition, and a craving for the approbation of others. His temperamental winsomeness and skilful tact win him the affections of the young Florentine, Romola. His brilliant ability raises him to a distinguished political position, and even the utter absence of moral principle—for a time at least—merely advances his welfare.

He treacherously betrays his foster-father Baldassare, to whom he owed all the advantages which he had used for his own aggrandisement. Baldassare follows Tito, who manages successfully to avoid him for a while. But Tito is at heart a coward, and fear of discovery takes the place that remorse would take in a morally better man. "Unscrupulousness gets rid of much," remarks his creator, "but not of toothache or wounded vanity, or the sense of loneliness against which, as the world at present stands, there is no security but a thoroughly healthy jaw, and a just, loving soul." And there came a time when the dreadful vitality of deeds pressed upon Tito for the first time, and persisted in pressing like the *peine forte et dure* of mediæval times. "Consequences are unpitying," observes Parson Irwine. "Our deeds carry their terrible consequences quite apart from any fluctuations that went before—consequences that are hardly ever confined to ourselves. There is no sort of wrong deed of which a man can bear the punishment alone. You can't isolate yourself and say that the evil which



is in you shall not spread. Men's lives are as thoroughly blended with each other as the air they breathe; evil spreads as necessarily as disease."

George Eliot, however, never taught with Novalis that "character is destiny," which indeed she regarded as a questionable maxim. She fully admitted that the tragedy of life is not created entirely from within, and whilst affirming that "our deeds are fetters that we forge ourselves," equally admitted that "it is the world that brings the iron."

And yet whilst admitting the tremendous power upon us which is wielded by circumstance, there is little trace in her writings of that blighting fatalism which darkens the pages of some modern novelists.

"It lies not in our power to love or hate,  
For will in us is over-ruled by Fate,"

sang Marlowe. On the other side, Emerson with his optimistic idealism has declared: "Fate has its law, limitation its limits, is differently seen from above and from below, from within and from without. But though fate is immense, so is power, which is the other part of the dual world. If fate follows and limits power, power attends and antagonizes fate. We must respect fate as natural history. If you please to plant yourself on the side of fate, and say fate is all, then we say the path of fate is the freedom of man. For ever wells out the impulse of choosing and acting in the soul. 'Look not on Nature, for her name is Fate,' said the oracle. The too much contemplation of these limits induces meanness. They talk much of destiny, their birth star, etc., are in a lower dangerous frame, and invite the evils they fear."

Full as George Eliot's stories are of the tragedy of life, it is not surely the tragedy of circumstance so much as the tragedy of lost opportunities; and although her point of view was not flushed with the rosy hope that tinged the teaching of Emerson, yet her general attitude was not very different. In *Adam*

*Bede*, *Romola*, and *Daniel Deronda*, to mention none other of her books, there are epochs in the lives of the characters which, taken at the flood, had led on to moral fortune. There were occasions—not merely one but several—when a stronger resolve would have changed the entire complexion of the future. Did Gwendolen Harleth enter upon her marriage with Grandcourt unwarned? Could any woman's eyes have been opened more convincingly with Lydia Glasher's impressive warning, than were Gwendolen's as to Grandcourt's character? Might not Tito time after time have repaired the injury done to his foster-father? No writer indeed more unswervingly upheld the trustworthiness of the moral instincts than did our author: even poor bewildered Dorothea exclaimed at a time of great difficulty, "While desiring what is perfectly good, even though we don't quite know what it is, and cannot do what we would, we are part of the Divine power against the evil, widening the skirts of light, and making the struggle with darkness narrower."

"I can't argue any longer; I don't know what is wise, but my heart will not let me do it," cried Maggie.

"It's the will of them above," observed Dolly Winthrop, "as many things should be dark to us, but there are some things as I never feel in the dark about, and they are mostly what comes in the day's work."

To look back for a moment, the most prominent characteristics of George Eliot's ethical teaching are threefold: (1) her insistence on duty, (2) her gospel of sympathy, (3) her conviction of the inexorable law of retribution. Each of these is dependent upon and interwoven with the others. The highest call of duty is not to be complied with without the presence of sympathy. The neglect of duty brings into action all the consequences of retribution. And George Eliot insisted so strongly on duty, *because* she firmly believed in the trustworthiness of the moral instinct. This was

the fundamental principle which gives such firmness to her ethical teaching. In turning from her strong inspiring teaching to her philosophy of life, we are conscious of a change, and some consideration of it will prepare the way to an understanding of the apparent inconsistency of her religious position.

Deeply ingrained in her temperament was a constant sadness, and this sadness had a twofold result—(1) it made her pessimistic in her attitude towards life; (2) it made her curiously deficient in faith, not only as regards great matters, but even in the most trivial things of life.

It made her pessimistic. To call her a pessimist would be scarcely accurate; her womanly nature recoiled from the uncompromising sternness of a Schopenhauer. She herself has described this hesitating attitude as one of meliorism. Be that as it may, she looked on life as a bitter struggle at best. "Let us make haste to help one another," she seems to say; "to make it, if possible, a little less bitter. Love may not bring hope to the soul, but it can soothe its poignant anguish."

This attitude partakes more of a negative optimism than a positive pessimism, and, depressing though it may be, imparts an added grandeur to her gospel of duty. There is that in her attitude which reminds us of the well-known exclamation by Robertson of Brighton, "If there be no God, no future state, yet even then it is better to be generous than selfish, better to be chaste than to be licentious, to be true than to be false, better to be brave than to be a coward."

Mr. Hutton, in his interesting Essay on George Eliot's *Life and Letters*, dwells at considerable length on her want of faith. I am inclined to think that from a religious point of view he makes too much of this characteristic, and, arguing from her intellectual sympathies with the Rationalistic School, does not sufficiently allow for the strong religious bias of her feelings, which often swept away in some tidal impulse the colder philosophy of her thought.

It is true that she entertained a curious but characteristic disbelief that her friends when separated from her could go on loving her, and her temperamental inability to endorse Tennyson's cry—

“ . . . that good shall fall  
At last, far off, at last to all,  
And every winter change to spring,”

gives a tinge of hopelessness to her philosophy, which one might have expected to have exercised an injurious influence upon her ethical teaching. But this it did not do. Inconsistent she may have been, but it was a noble inconsistency, and induces one to pause and consider how far the intellectual expression which George Eliot gave to her views on life, represented her finest and deepest feelings. She might not seem to even faintly trust “the larger hope,” but she could *assure* us to live through pain with “conscious, clear-eyed endurance.”

The words she puts into the mouth of Adam Bede may well have come from her own heart. “There’s nothing but what is bearable, as long as a man can work. The nature of things doesn’t change, though it seems as if one’s own life was nothing but change. The square of four is sixteen, and you must lengthen your lever in proportion to your weight is as true when a man’s miserable as when he’s happy; and the best of working is it gives you a griphold of things outside your own lot.”

Irradiating the sombre character of George Eliot’s philosophy of life is her redeeming sense of humour, redeeming because humour is the great antiseptic of all that is morbid in our moral structure. And just as, despite her humour, George Eliot is never cynical, so, with all her sadness, she never falters in proclaiming that we must not shrink from pain in taking up whatever cross duty may bid us take up. With regard to her position on religious matters, it is true that she disclaimed any belief in a personal God, and regarded the hope of immortality, and a trust in a



Divine, Loving Intelligence, as "mere opium," which it was braver to do without. None the less her religious influence has been most wide and deep amongst men and women who never mastered a theological tract, or concerned themselves with the problems of Biblical criticism. She might reject Theism as an intellectual belief, but she takes it as the great inspiring motive of all her books. An eloquent Catholic Irish writer has compared her in this respect to a sightless marble statue, which holds up to the world in the lamp of her own genius the light that she herself could never see.

Some one once described himself as an agnostic tempered by qualms of belief, and is it possible for any student of George Eliot's writings to escape the feeling that the writer is now and again almost persuaded

"If ere when Faith had fallen asleep  
I heard a voice, 'Believe no more,'  
And heard an ever breaking shore  
That tumbled in the Godless deep,  
A warmth within the heart would melt  
The freezing reason's colder part,  
And like a man in wrath a heart  
Stood up and answered, 'I have felt'?"

Not only in her books, but in her letters and conversation, George Eliot's sympathies were not with the destructive critics, not with those with whom she was at any rate intellectually at one, but with the faint-hearted people, who could not do without what she called opium—religious aspirations and fervent convictions. She wrote thus to a correspondent in 1862:—

"Please don't ask me again not to rob a man of his religious belief, as if you thought my mind tended to such robbery. I have too profound a conviction of the efficacy that lies in all sincere faith, and the spiritual blight that comes with no faith, to have any negative propagandism in me; in fact, I have very little sympathy with freethinkers as a class. I have lost all interest in mere antagonism to religious doctrines." Is this the language of the cold

agnostic, which George Eliot is represented to be by some writers? Her irony was never directed against religious opinions as such, but, as she herself said in a letter to her publisher, Blackwood, "against the vices and weaknesses that belong to human nature in any sort of clothing." Her biographer has put on record these significant words, which show, if indeed it needs the showing, that the religious atmosphere of her books is no mere artistic trick. "She told me," said Mr. Cross, "that in all her best work there was *a not herself which took possession of her*, and that she felt her own personality to be *merely the instrument* to which this spirit, as it were, was acting." It is a common way with many materialistic writers to point to those absurd and grotesque forms into which religious belief sometimes crystallizes, as if upon these, and these alone, the genuineness of religious truth was to be judged. Not so our author. "Whatever," she remarks in *Janet's Repentance*, "might be the weaknesses of the ladies at Milby, that pruned the luxuriance of their lace and ribbons, cut out garments for the poor, distributed tracts, quoted Scripture, and defined the true Gospel, they had learned this, that there was a Divine work to be done in life, a rule of goodness higher than the opinion of their neighbours; and if the notion of a heaven in reserve for themselves was a little too prominent, yet the theory of fitness for that heaven consisted in purity of heart, and Christlike compassion, and the subduing of selfish desires. They might give the name of piety to much that was puritanic egoism, they might call many things sin that were not sin, but they had at least the feeling that sin was to be avoided and resisted; and colour-blindness, which made them mistake drab for scarlet, is better than total blindness, which sees no distinction of colour at all."

More faith and more hope George Eliot might truly have had to advantage, but what Paul considered the greatest of the trinity she was richly endowed with. In her very first book she finely ex-

presses the power of the gospel of sympathy, upon which she so constantly dwells, and without which her gospel of duty had lost its inspiring force.

"Blessed influence of one true, loving human soul on another, not calculable by algebra, not deducible by logic, but mysterious, effectual, mighty as the hidden process by which the tiny seed is quickened, and bursts into tall stem and broad leaf, and glowing tasselled flower. Ideas are often poor ghosts; our sun-filled eyes cannot discern them, they pass athwart us in thin vapour, and cannot make themselves heard. But sometimes they are made flesh, they breathe upon us with warm breath, they touch us with soft, responsive hands, they look at us with sad, sincere eyes, and speak to us in appealing tone. They are clothed in a living, human soul, with all its conflicts, its faith, and its love. Then their presence is a power, then they shake us like a passion, and we are drawn after them with gentle compulsion, as flame is drawn to flame."

Among such potent personalities will George Eliot be always reckoned. We may delight in her work as an artist, but it is George Eliot the sincere ethical teacher whom we shall longest remember. She was a teacher who combined the terrible earnestness of a Carlyle with the warm, human sympathies of a Mazzini. On her position as a literary artist critics will differ; but her acute intellect and lofty-minded idealism should ever be an inspiration to thousands of men and women. If the burden of her message has not softened the jangling discords of life, or thrown any light upon its perplexing mysteries, if she does not lift the imagination into sunnier and serener climes, she has at any rate fired our tepid sympathies; bidden us, with Emerson, "hitch our wagons to a star"; and, in the sad, solemn chant of her teaching, our listening ears have caught snatches from time to time of those deep eternal harmonies that give human life a meaning, make duty noble and beautiful, and love a holy consecration.

ARTHUR RICKETT.

## John Ruskin

**M**R. RUSKIN'S message to the age belongs to the order of the great utterances that are for all time. The most notable fact of this century, in spite of its passionate materialism, has been a marked transition from individualism to altruism, from selfishness to neighbourliness, and none of Mr. Ruskin's immediate predecessors or contemporaries—not even Wordsworth, or Byron, or Shelley, or Carlyle, Emerson, Mazzini, Victor Hugo, Browning, Tennyson, Lowell, Whitman, or William Morris—has exercised a greater influence than he in thus helping mankind to mark a degree higher on the scale of existence. He is something more than a mere art critic and satirist of economic fallacies. He is a discoverer in the world both of science and of art. He has not only revealed to us the truth and beauty of the Divine Spirit in nature and in art, but by his statement of the great law of equivalent service has advanced economic science to the place it should occupy in the religion of humanity.

### HIS THEORY OF ART.

It has been objected to Mr. Ruskin's theory of art that it is based on theological prejudice. With Mr. Ruskin, art is the interpreter of the divine mind—the expression of the music of human kinship with the eternal order, the eternal mystery of God and Nature. Though it may be true of science as well as of art, that its function is to consider things in their relation to the divine author of the universe, it is absurd to object



to Mr. Ruskin's "theological bias" on this ground. Both science and art reveal the truth in different ways, and the truth only is from God. Art, according to Mr. Ruskin, is religion, and has to do with "the feelings of love, reverence, or dread, with which the human mind is affected by its conceptions of spiritual being."

The true artist therefore, as Mr. E. T. Cook, one of the ablest of Mr. Ruskin's commentators, points out, is necessarily a man of true religion. "The world of Beauty," he says, "is like the Beryl in Rossetti's ballad—

"None sees here but the pure alone."

That such has in fact been the case is the burden of all Mr. Ruskin's books on the history of artists and art schools. It is the decadence of the art of architecture, corresponding with a decay of vital religion, that he finds written on the "Stones of Venice," the clearness of early faith that he finds reflected in the brightness of the pictures of Florence; the gladness of Greek religion that gives for him the sharpness to "the Plough-share of Pentelicus."

Art, therefore, according to Ruskin, cannot be the handmaid of immorality and vice; it is only false art which thus degrades itself. Mr. Ruskin does not believe in the doctrine of art for art's sake, but in that of art for man's sake and God's sake. This is what he says on the dependence of ideas of beauty on purity of mind. "It is necessary to the existence of an idea of beauty that the sensual pleasure which may be its basis should be accompanied first with joy, then with love of the object, then with the perception of kindness in a superior intelligence, finally, with thankfulness and veneration towards the intelligence itself; and as no idea can be at all considered as in any way an idea of beauty until it be made up of these emotions any more than we can be said to have an idea of a letter, of which we perceive the perfume and the fair writing, without understanding the contents of it, or intent of

it ; and as these emotions are in no way resultant from, nor obtainable by, any operation of the intellect, it is evident that the sensation of beauty is not sensual on the one hand, nor is it intellectual on the other, but is dependent on a pure, right, and open state of the heart, both for its truth and for its intensity, insomuch that even the right after-action of the intellect upon facts of beauty so apprehended is dependent on the acuteness of the heart-feeling about them. And thus the apostolic words come true, in this minor respect, as in all others, that men are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, having the *understanding* darkened because of the hardness of their *hearts*, and so, being past feeling, give themselves up to lasciviousness. For we do indeed see constantly that men having naturally acute perceptions of the beautiful, yet not receiving it with a pure heart, nor into their hearts at all, never comprehend it, nor receive good from it ; but make it a mere minister to their desires and accompaniment and seasoning of lower sensual pleasures, until all their emotions take the same earthly stamp, and the sense of beauty sinks into the servant of lust."

Again Ruskin insists that there can be no great art that is not true to nature. To be true to nature, however, does not mean that the artist must be a mere copyist. Art is creative rather than imitative. "To draw anything like a complete landscape," says Ruskin, "direct imitation becomes more or less impossible."

Twenty men of genius may be set to paint a given landscape ; the products of their handiwork will be as essentially different as would twenty poems descriptive of the same scene. It is not the landscape they paint, as Mr. John Stuart Mill points out, "but the real thing described is the state of emotion of the spectator." Poetry, as Sir Henry Taylor says, must not fit too close to life's realities,

"In truth to nature missing truth to art ;  
For art commends not counterparts and copies,

But from our life a nobler life would shape,  
Bodies celestial from terrestrial raise,  
And teach us not jejune what we are,  
But what we may be when the Parian block  
Yields to the hand of Phidias."

Every man therefore is the creator of his own universe, and the poet is remarkable among men in that he not only sees more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in other people's philosophy, but in that he has the powers suggesting to others what they could not themselves see or conceive without his aid. Hence he himself is the sublimest thing in nature, and Mr. Ruskin is undoubtedly right in his assertion that "the creation of such a system as a high human intelligence, endowed with its ineffably perfect instruments of eye and hand, is a far more appalling manifestation of infinite power than the making either of seas or mountains."

What is meant by being true to nature, is being true to her methods of operation. Nature does not hang grapes upon thorns or figs upon thistles; she casts no shadow that is out of harmony with the light that beats upon the shadowed object, no matter at what angle the rays may fall. She tells no lies, she is guilty of no shams. Consistency is in all her ways, and she does not call forth our tears when all goes merrily with us, nor excite us to levity when we stand by the open grave. The poet who is faithful to nature, or "true to life," as we say, observes the like consistency. The characters of his picture or his poem may be anything but the counterfeit presentments of real men and women; they may be such impossible beings as Caliban or Ariel, yet the work will be true to nature and to life provided it is harmonious in all its parts. Those works of art which aim at the representation of what is called real life belong to the lowest order. Of such are the productions of too many of our modern novelists and playwrights.

The realists deal with what belongs rather to the region of the scientific specialist than to that of the

artist. They too often degrade art by describing, not human nature, but inhuman nature. The difference between the human and the inhuman is finely expressed by Mr. Ruskin in the following passage from *The Crown of Wild Olive*:—"Take the faith in its utmost terms. When the captain of the *London* shook hands with his mate, saying, 'God speed you! I will go down with my passengers,' *that* I believe to be 'human nature.' He does not do it from any religious motive—from any hope of reward or any fear of punishment—he does it because he is a man. But when a mother, living among the fair fields of merry England, gives her two-year-old child to be suffocated under a mattress in an inner room, while the said mother waits and talks outside, *that* I believe to be *not* human nature. You have the two extremes there, shortly. And you men and mothers who are here face to face with me to-night, I call upon you to say which of these is human, and which inhuman—which 'natural' and which 'unnatural.' Choose your creed at once, I beseech you, choose it with unshaken choice—choose it for ever. Will you take for foundation, for act, and hope, the faith that this man was such as God made him, or that this woman was such as God made her? Which of them has failed from their nature, from their present, possible, actual nature; not their nature of long ago, but their nature of now? Which has betrayed it, falsified it? Did the guardian who died in his trust die inhumanly and as a fool; and did the murderess of her child fulfil the law of her being? Choose, I say; infinitude of choices hang upon this. You have had false prophets among you—for centuries you have had them—solemnly warned against them though you were; false prophets who have told you that all men are nothing but fiends and wolves, half beast, half devil. Believe that, and indeed you may sink to that. But refuse that, and have faith that God 'made you upright,' though *you* have sought out many inventions; so you will strive daily to be-



come more what your Maker meant and means you to be, and daily gives you also the power to be—and you will cling more and more to the nobleness and virtue that is in you, saying, ‘My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go.’”

Man, says Goethe, lives from within outwards, so the artist must work from within outwards. Again, Mrs. Browning in *Aurora Leigh*:—

“Inward evermore  
To outward, so in life and so in art,  
Which still is life.”

It is false art which works exclusively upon the outward, or from the outward to the inward. It is from this method of Goethe's that “there arises a poetry of nature, and only in this way is it possible to be original.” By inferior artists I do not mean those who work honestly according to their lights, for such men have a noble mission to accomplish in this world, however limited may be their powers; but I mean those who prostitute any genius they may possess by pandering to the lowest tastes, who are true only to that kind of life “which begins in death and ends in hell,” and who are ever introducing us to “selfish, worthless human slugs, whose slime has failed to lubricate their path in life.” With these artists life is as a troubled sea, casting up mire and dirt. With the true artist also life is a troubled sea, storm-swept by blasts before which stately galleons go down, but whose tides, nevertheless, are swayed by moonlike influences, silent, mysterious, irresistible.

Ruskin was sent to Oxford by his father and mother with a view to his becoming a clergyman of the Church of England. Unfortunately for the Church, but fortunately for the world, he joined the priesthood of another order. He became the high-priest of a temple not made with hands—the temple of the Universe whose altar-lights are the eternal stars and the music of whose anthems is set to the rhythmic roll of ocean tides and echoes of the everlasting hills.

Men of the modern world have but recently begun to discover that the universe has been made beautiful by the Creator, not only as the temple but as the home of His creatures. John Ruskin more than any other man has helped us to this discovery. Jean Jacques Rousseau in the middle of the last century was the first to give a hint of it. Chateaubriand, who, Mr. Leslie Stephen tells us, "had the audacity to assert categorically and unequivocally that the Alps were ugly," charged Rousseau with being an avowed worshipper of them. Chateaubriand was a champion of the faith, and saw in Rousseau's exaltation of the charms of mountain scenery the inauguration of the rule of materialism. How far we have travelled during the last hundred and fifty years in the direction of nobler conceptions of external nature may be estimated when we contrast the teaching of Mr. Ruskin with that of the writers before the advent of Rousseau. In the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century men had no love for the grander aspects of external nature, but rather a dread of them. In fact, it was a favourite argument of the atheists in the period dominated by "the philosophy of Locke, the art of Vanbrugh, the politics of Walpole, and the poetry of Pope," that the world could not have been created with a benevolent design, because if it had been the Almighty would not have thrown up such hideous obstacles as mountains. Good and pious people used to reply to this argument by pointing out that even mountains, notwithstanding their ugliness and their obstructiveness, served the useful purpose of feeding sheep and other animals whose wool or fur an all-wise Providence had ordained should be utilised for clothing to keep us warm in the winter. A love of nature for its own sake was not a characteristic of our poetry before Wordsworth, Scott, Coleridge, Keats, Byron, and Shelley. Ruskin is their great successor. "The Lake mountains," says Mr. Leslie Stephen, "discourse very excellent music, and sometimes in favourable moments can rise to the

sublimity of the great ode on the 'Intimations of Immortality,' or the song at the feast of Brougham Castle. But it must be confessed that they are a little too much infested with the 'sleep that is among the lonely hills,' and can even at times drop into the flat prose which fills certain pages of the 'Excursion.' We can understand how a poet brought up at their feet should labour under a permanent confusion between Providence and the late Duke of Wellington—a delusion which would have been scarcely conceivable amongst the great central ridges which have shaped a Continent and fashioned the history of the world. Scott, too, might have been stimulated to a loftier strain by the tonic of a few good glaciers and avalanches in place of his dumpy, heather-clad hills. Coleridge, Byron, and Shelley have each sung hymns, after their fashion, to Mont Blanc. Coleridge makes the monarch of mountains preach a very excellent sermon, though I fear it is a plagiarism. There are some good touches, as in the lines :

"Around thee and above  
Deep is the air and dark, substantially black,  
An ebon mass; methinks thou piercest it  
As with a wedge."

But we feel him to be more at home in the fantastic and gloomy scenery of *Kubla Khan* or the magical icebergs of the *Ancient Mariner*. The mountain air is not congenial to opium-eating. Byron's mountains treat us to some fine vigorous poetry and have filled popular guide-books with appropriate quotations, but they are just a little too anxious to express their contempt for mankind. To my taste, though I speak with diffidence, Shelley's poetry is in the most complete harmony with the scenery of the higher Alps; and I think it highly creditable to the mountains that they should agree so admirably with the most poetic of poets."

Ruskin states that he received his earliest inspiration from Byron, his mother, though a strong

Calvinist, having had the good sense to admire the works of that poet and to put them early into her son's hands. Another work however which largely determined Ruskin in the choice of a career was a volume of Rogers's poems illustrated by Turner, of which Mr. Telford, Ruskin's father's partner, made him a present. It is to the inspiration he received from those illustrations that we owe his *Modern Painters*. A great man's genius can only be rightly estimated by a kindred spirit. The rest of us need an interpreter. Ruskin became for us Turner's interpreter. Though Turner was then sixty years of age, and Ruskin a mere boy, the future author of "*Modern Painters*" had the genius to detect the wonderful truth and beauty of the great artist's drawing. He became a passionate student of that master's pictures, and when Turner reached the third and final period in the development of his powers, and produced those great works which are the glory of English art, but which contemporary critics for the most part regarded as evidences that his hand had lost its cunning and that his mind was giving way, Ruskin was the one man who understood the significance of the artist's new departure. He set to work to defend Turner against the sneers and jeers of his assailants. Mr. Marshall Mather in his *John Ruskin his Life and Teaching*, remarks that Turner in the last period of his power became alive to those rarer moods of nature which are seen only by the few, and painted them with wondrous faithfulness. "Inasmuch as he watched for those sunsets that but once or twice in twenty years throw their wealth of flaming colour over the Western sky; and then, with matchless skill, revealed his sight to men, those who knew the setting sun only as oftenest seen, said he was false to nature, and attempting to 'gild the gold of God.' Inasmuch as his eye caught cloud-forms that are seldom seen in the life of man, and his mighty imaginative power ranged them upon the canvas, the men who knew but little of God's handiwork in the heavens spoke of



these skies as faithless and gaudy. Inasmuch as he was lashed for hours to the mast of the tempest-ridden vessel in order to watch the waves clap their hands together, and hearken unto deep as it called unto deep, and thus catch the spirit of the storm, the miserable criticism of those who had never faced nature in her moods of wildest energy, as they beheld his representations, was 'soapsuds and whitewash.' Light is proportioned to the power of the eye; feeling to the depth of the soul. Here was a seer—a prophet of nature—telling his countrymen what he knew of the spirit of the universe; and they in turn wagged their heads and mocked."

To one who, from youth, intuitively appreciated the genius of Turner, such criticisms were unbearable. They roused his soul from poetic reverie, and fired it for the fray. He speedily fell to sharpening his weapons and preparing his plans of attack. He wrote a lengthy letter in Turner's defence, purposing to forward it to one of the leading journals; but, as it exceeded all journalistic limits, he threw it into the form of a somewhat bulky pamphlet, which continued to increase in matter until it finally shaped itself into the first volume of *Modern Painters*.

This was published in 1843, and was followed at intervals extending over a period of nearly twenty years by the other volumes of that great work and by his *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, *Stones of Venice* and miscellaneous writings on art. These cover Mr. Ruskin's first literary period, ending in 1860. In the space at my command it would be impossible to give the reader any adequate summary or analysis of the contents of this great treasury of art literature. I can only here state what is the general drift of their teaching. Like all great minds, Mr. Ruskin deals with great principles, and the distinguishing character of his books as essays on art is, he himself says, "their bringing everything to a root in human passion and human hope." Every principle he has stated he has traced to some vital and spiritual

fact, and in his works on architecture the preference he has accorded to one school over another is founded on a comparison of their influences on the life of the workman.

#### MR. RUSKIN'S ECONOMIES.

"Every age," says Mr. Swinburne, "is one of decadence in the eyes of its own fools." I may add that it is also a weakness of wise men to take too gloomy a view of the tendency of their own times. Francis Bacon, though he lived in the spacious times of great Elizabeth, expressed the opinion "that they were somewhat on the descent of the wheel," and other philosophers have not been wanting who have failed to detect the undercurrent of spiritual force that has preserved the life of the nation at times when to the superficial observer it seemed to be wholly given up to frivolity, selfishness and vice. I have often thought that both Ruskin and Carlyle have been too pessimistic in their estimates of the characteristics of the Victorian age. I cannot believe that the teaching of these great prophets has been in vain. I am sanguine enough to think that what will strike the future historian of this period as its more remarkable feature will be the advance which we have made from individualism in the direction of altruism, or in plain English, from selfishness to neighbourliness. Men in our pulpits no longer urge, as they used to do when some of us were boys, that "if there be only two saved, make up your mind to be one." They preach rather that faith without works is dead, and that the salvation of the individual must depend upon his conduct rather than upon his opinions,—must depend, in fact, upon his self-sacrificing devotion to the salvation of the community and the race. Not only in theology but in politics, in economics, and in art our mental horizon has been considerably widened, and our common human sympathies broadened. Mr. Ruskin, however, is undoubtedly right in his eloquent warning

that the besetting sin of this age is what Matthew Arnold called its passionate materialism.

Speculation, gambling, the desire to get money without working for it and to accumulate wealth for its own sake are the natural products of this degrading spirit. There is undoubtedly a tendency to set up false ideals, both of individual and of national wealth, but the teaching of Mr. Ruskin has, I believe, done much to counteract this tendency. He has hurled his most powerful invectives against the competitive system, which has fostered the "getting on" idea, and against the inordinate growth of the application of machine power to production, which has aggravated the evils of competition. The cupidity which is the natural outgrowth of all this he has described in a memorable passage in *Fors Clavigera*. "The benevolence involved in the construction of railways," he says, "amounts exactly to this much and no more—that if the British public were informed that engineers were now confident, after their practice in the Cenis and St. Gothard tunnels, that they could make a railway to hell, the British public would instantly invest in the concern to any amount, and stop church building all over the country for fear of diminishing the dividends."

It is a mistake, however, to suppose that Mr. Ruskin is opposed uncompromisingly to all forms of machine production. What he really teaches is that what can best be done by hand labour should be done by that natural process, and that machinery should only be used where it does not destroy the workman's interest in his work, does not, in fact, convert him into a machine himself. There are three principles, he says, by which employment should be regulated. These are:

- (1) Vital or muscular power.
- (2) Natural mechanical power of wind, water, and electricity, and
- (3) Artificial mechanical power.

Mr. Ruskin contends that it is the first principle of

economy to use the vital or muscular power first, then the natural forces, and only in the last resource to resort to artificial power. "It is always better for a man with his own hands to feed and clothe himself than to stand idle while a machine works for him, and if he cannot by all the labour healthily possible to him feed and clothe himself, then it is better to use an inexpensive machine, as a windmill or watermill, than a costly one like a steam engine, so long as we have natural force at our own disposal." It seems strange to us at this time of day that when Mr. Ruskin first began to preach this obvious Christian doctrine he was regarded as a very dangerous person. The articles now contained in "Unto this Last" were originally written for the *Cornhill Magazine*, and created, it is said, considerable editorial alarm. Afterwards, when they were issued in volume form, their author was denounced as an enemy of Society. That is only thirty-five years ago. As I have already hinted, we have made some advance since then, and for that advance we are indebted chiefly to Mr. Ruskin himself.

I will now give in Mr. Ruskin's own words a comparison of some of the results of our modern system of industry with what might have been accomplished by the application of Mr. Ruskin's principles.

"A man and a woman with their children, properly trained, are able easily to cultivate as much ground as will feed them; to build as much wall and roof as will lodge them, and to build and weave as much cloth as will clothe them. They can all be perfectly happy and healthy in doing this. Supposing that they invent machinery which will build, plough, thresh, cook and weave, and that they have none of these things any more to do, but may read, or play croquet, or cricket, all day long, I believe myself that they will neither be so good nor so happy as without the machines. But I waive my belief in this matter for the time. I will assume that they become more refined and moral persons, and that idleness is in the future to be the mother of all good. But observe, I repeat, the



power of your machine is only enabling them to be idle. It will not enable them to live better than they did before, nor to live in greater numbers. Get your heads quite clear on that point. Or bring me—for I am not inconvincible by any kind of evidence—bring me the testimony of an English family or two to their increased felicity. Or if you cannot do so much as that, can you convince even themselves of it? They *are* perhaps happy, if only they knew how happy they were. Virgil thought so long ago of simple rustics; but you hear at present your steam-propelled rustics are crying out that they are anything else than happy, and that they regard their boasted progress 'in the light of a monstrous Sham.' I must tell you one little thing, however, which greatly perplexes my imagination, of the relieved ploughman sitting under his rose bower, reading poetry. I have told it you before, indeed, but I forget where. There was really a great festivity, and expression of satisfaction in the new order of things down in Cumberland, a little while ago; some first of May, I think it was—a country festival such as the old heathen, who had no iron servants, used to keep with piping and dancing. So I thought from the liberated country people—their work all done for them by goblins—we should have some extraordinary piping and dancing. But there was no dancing at all, and they could not even provide their own piping. They had their goblin to pipe for them. They walked in procession after their steam plough, and their steam plough whistled to them occasionally in the most melodious manner it could. Which seemed to me, indeed, a return to more than Arcadian simplicity; for in old Arcadia ploughboys truly whistled as they went, for want of thought; whereas, here was verily a large company walking without thought but not having any more even the capacity of doing their own whistling. But next as to the inside of the house. Before you got your power-looms, a woman could always make a chemise and petticoat of a bright

and pretty appearance. I have seen a Bavarian peasant woman at a church in Munich, looking a much grander creature, and more beautifully dressed, than any of the crossed and embroidered angels in Hesse's high-art frescoes (which happened to be just above her, so that I could look from one to the other). Well, here you are, in England, served by household demons, with five hundred fingers, at least, weaving, for one that used to weave in the days of Minerva. You ought to be able to show me five hundred dresses for one that used to be; tidiness ought to have become five hundred-fold tidier; tapestry should be increased into cinque-cento-fold iridescence of tapestry. Not only your peasant girl ought to be lying on the sofa reading poetry, but she ought to have in her wardrobe five hundred petticoats instead of one. Is that, indeed, your issue—or are you only on a curiously crooked way to it?

“It is just possible, indeed, that you may not have been allowed to get the use of the goblin's work—that other people may have got the use of it, and you none; because, perhaps, you have not been able to evoke goblins wholly for your own personal service; but have been borrowing goblins from the capitalist, and paying interest, in the “position of William,” on ghostly self-going planes; but suppose you had laid by capital enough, yourselves, to hire all the demons in the world—nay,—all that are inside of it; are you quite sure you know what you might best set them to work at? and what ‘useful things’ you should command them to make for you? I told you, last month, that no economist going (whether by steam or ghost) knew what are useful things and what are not. Very few of you know, yourselves, except by bitter experience of the want of them. And no demons, either of iron or spirit, can ever make them. There are three material things, not only useful, but essential to Life. No one ‘knows how to live’ till he has got them.

“These are Pure Air, Water, and Earth.

“There are three Immaterial things, not only useful,

but essential to Life. No one knows how to live till he has got them.

"These are Admiration, Hope, and Love. Admiration—the power of discerning and taking delight in what is beautiful in visible Form, and lovely in human Character; and, necessarily, striving to produce what is beautiful in form, and to become what is lovely in character.

"Hope—the recognition, by true Foresight, of better things to be reached hereafter, whether by ourselves or others; necessarily issuing in the straightforward and undisappointable effort to advance, according to our proper power, the gaining of them.

"Love, both of family and neighbour, faithful and satisfied.

"These are the six chiefly useful things to be got by Political Economy, when it *has* become a science."

"Food can only be got out of the earth, and happiness out of honesty." There you have the text of the whole of Ruskin's gospel. His political economy is based on the assumption that the source of material wealth is mother earth, which can be made to yield its increase better by natural than by artificial methods, and that in the distribution of that increase, the rightful share shall go to the worker, and no share at all to the idler. "The husbandman that laboureth shall be first partaker of the fruits." In his art teaching he enforces the doctrine that the source of spiritual wealth is honesty, that is to say, loyalty to the truth as revealed by God in the wonder and the glory of His universe, or in the voices of His prophets, whether they speak to us in language or in colour, in marble or in sound.

The earth, according to Ruskin, is the Lord's, and not the landlords', and to dress it and to keep the flocks of it is the first task of man and the final one. "This," he says in a fine passage in the *Crown of Wild Olive*, "is the education always of noblest law-givers, kings and teachers. The education of Hesiod, of Moses, of David, of all the true strength of Rome:

and all its tenderness; the pride of Cincinnatus and the inspiration of Virgil. Hand labour on the earth and the harvest of it brought forth with singing—not steam-piston labour on the earth and the harvest of it brought forth with steam whistling. You will have no prophet's voice accompanied by that shepherd's pipe and pastoral symphony." While there is no place for the idle landlord in Mr. Ruskin's economy, he is not a land nationaliser, he has very little faith in State control. Property to whom it is proper, land and tools to those who know how to use them; that is his theory of ownership. Nor does he, by any means, hold that though the cultivation of the soil is the natural occupation of man there is no need for anybody in the world but farmers and labourers. In letter XI. of *Fors Clavigera*, he gives a melancholy picture of the degradation to which it is to be feared vast numbers of our workmen have sunk through being divorced from the soil and employed on works which we boast of as marvellous evidences of modern progress. He was waiting one Saturday afternoon on the platform of the Furness-Abbey railway station, which disfigures the beautiful valley of the "deadly nightshade," in which the ruins of the Abbey stand. Modern progress has also planted a public house within the shadow of this magnificent ruin. Out of this public house Mr. Ruskin saw a troop of navvies hurry, in a half-drunken state, to catch their train. "We pitied the poor workmen doubly," he says, "first for being so wicked as to get drunk at four o'clock in the afternoon, and secondly for being employed in throwing up clods of earth on to an embankment, instead of spending the day, like us, in admiring the Abbey." "They were a fallen race," he adds, "even incapable, as I acutely felt, of appreciating the beauty of *Modern Painters*, or fathoming the magnificence of *Fors Clavigera*. But what had they done to deserve their fall, or what had I done to deserve the privilege of being the author of those valuable books, remained obscure to me; and indeed, whatever the deservings



may have been on either side, in this and other cases of the kind, it is always a marvel to me that the arrangement and its consequences are accepted so patiently. For observe what, in brief terms, the arrangement is. Virtually, the entire business of the world turns on the clear necessity of getting on table, hot or cold, if possible, meat—but, at least, vegetables—and at some hour of the day, for all of us; for you labourers, we will say at noon; for us æsthetical persons, we will say at eight in the evening; for we like to have done our eight hours' work of admiring abbeys before we dine. But, at some time of day, the mutton and turnips, or, since mutton itself is only a transformed state of turnips, we may say, as sufficiently typical of everything, turnips only, must absolutely be got for us both. And nearly every problem of state policy and economy, as at present understood and practised, consists in some device for persuading your labourers to go and dig up dinner for us reflective and æsthetical persons, who like to sit still and think, or admire. So that when we get to the bottom of the matter, we find the inhabitants of this earth broadly divided into two great masses;—the peasant paymasters—spade in hand, original and imperial producers of turnips; and, waiting on them all round, a crowd of polite persons, modestly expectant of turnips, for some—too often theoretical—service. There is, first, the clerical person, whom the peasant pays in turnips for giving him moral advice; then the legal person, whom the peasant pays in turnips for telling him, in black letter, that his house is his own; there is, thirdly, the courtly person, whom the peasant pays in turnips for presenting a celestial appearance to him; there is, fourthly, the literary person, whom the peasant pays in turnips for talking daintily to him; and there is lastly the military person, whom the peasant pays in turnips for standing, with a cocked hat on, in the middle of the field, and exercising a moral influence upon the neighbours. Nor is the peasant to be pitied if these arrangements

are all faithfully carried out. If he really gets moral advice from his moral adviser; if his house is, indeed, maintained to be his own by his legal adviser; if courtly persons, indeed, present a celestial appearance to him; and literary persons, indeed, talk beautiful words; if, finally, his scarecrow do indeed stand quiet, as with a stick through the middle of it, producing, if not always a wholesome terror, at least, a picturesque effect, and colour contrast of scarlet with green, they are all of them worth their daily turnips. But if, perchance, it happen that he get *immoral* advice from his moralist, or if his lawyer advise him that his house is *not* his own; and his bard, story-teller, or other literary charmer, begin to charm him unwisely, not with beautiful words, but with obscene and ugly words—and he be readier with his response in vegetable produce for these than for any other sort; finally, if his quiet scarecrow become disquiet, and seem likely to bring upon him a whole flight of scarecrows out of his neighbours' fields . . . it is time to look into such arrangements under their several heads. Considering further these two sorts of providers, it is evident that they both have need of two things, land and tools. Land to be subdued, and plough or potter's wheel wherewith to subdue it. Now, as aforesaid, so long as the polite surrounding personages are content to offer their salutary advice, their legal information, etc., to the peasant, for what these articles are verily worth in vegetable produce, all is perfectly fair; but if any of the polite persons contrive to get hold of the peasants' land, or of his tools, and put him into the 'position of William,' and make him pay annual interest, first for the wood that he planes, and then for the plane he planes it with!—my friends, polite or otherwise, these two arrangements cannot be considered as settled yet, even by the ninety-two newspapers, with all Belgravia to back them. Not by the newspapers, nor by Belgravia, nor even by the Cambridge Catechism, or the Cambridge Professor of Political Economy."

Mr. Ruskin then proceeds to demolish the said Cambridge professor, Mr. Fawcett to wit, who, in the orthodox style of the old economists, thus explains the relations of what Lord Beaconsfield called the three factors of the land problem:—

“We have described,” says the Professor, “the requisities of production to be three—land, labour, and capital. Since, therefore, land, labour, and capital are essential to the production of wealth, it is natural to suppose that the wealth which is produced ought to be possessed by those who own the land, labour, and capital which have respectively contributed to its production. The share of wealth which is thus allotted to the possessor of the land is termed rent; the portion allotted to the labourer is termed wages, and the remuneration of the capitalist is termed profit.”

Mr. Ruskin shows that this apportionment is entirely unscientific. The professor unfortunately assumes that the possessors of the land are absolutely idle persons, and these have no right to exist in any civilized society. Again, the professor founds his principle of allotment on the phrase, “it is natural to suppose,” which is hardly scientific. As Mr. Ruskin asks, “Do the Cambridge mathematicians, then, in these advanced days, tell their pupils that it is natural to suppose the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right ones? Nay, in the present case, I regret to say it has sometimes been thought *unnatural* to suppose any such thing; and so exceedingly unnatural, that to receive either a ‘remuneration,’ or a ‘portion,’ or a ‘share,’ for the loan of anything, without personally working, was held by Dante and other such simple persons in the middle ages to be one of the worst of the sins that could be committed *against* nature; and the receivers of such interest were put in the same circle of Hell with the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.”

That Mr. Ruskin’s economic doctrine is thoroughly scientific has been shown by one of the most distinguished of our younger economic experts, viz., Mr. Hobson, who says:—“Neither in *Unto this Last*, nor



elsewhere, does Ruskin deal with the 'cost' side of industry so fully or so powerfully as with the 'utility' side. He shows triumphantly that statements regarding the quantity of wealth owned by an individual or a nation convey no serviceable meaning until we know who will have the using of the 'wealth,' and what use they will make of it. His insistence that 'wealth' must be reduced to terms of vital use, and measured by the actual contribution that it makes to the true purposes of human life, constitutes the humanisation of political economy. 'There is no Wealth but Life—life including all its powers of love, of joy, and of admiration. That country is the richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings; that man is the richest who, having perfected the functions of his own life to the utmost, has also the widest helpful influence, both personal and by means of his possessions, over the life of others.' Thus does Ruskin lay the foundation of his science of wealth, showing that the pivotal terms of commercial economy, 'supply' and 'demand,' have no human significance until the 'cost' and 'utility' which control them are reduced to terms of effort and satisfaction. What Ruskin really does is to show that commercial self-seeking cannot be profitably isolated as a subject of study, and that the study of the actions of 'business' men cannot be elevated into the position of a science. . . . Closely linked with this exposure of the logical defects of commercial economics is the impassioned indictment of competition, upon moral grounds, summed up in the judgment that 'Government and Co-operation are the laws of Life, Anarchy and Competition the Laws of Death.' But though Ruskin over-estimates the facility with which Justice and Honesty can be substituted for Competition as the standard of commercial conduct, this does not invalidate his impeachment of the ethics of business. The rhetorical eloquence of his attack has led to an undue depreciation of his argumentative strength. His book is, indeed, the most effective exposure of the



fundamental fallacy that the greatest wealth of a community can be attained by the free play of the enlightened selfishness of its individual members. Two special qualifications for a political economist Ruskin possesses, which are commonly denied to the professor and the business man. The first is that he is by temper and by training a thorough artist—that is to say, a skilled specialist upon the quality of work and of enjoyment. Considering that the true worth of all industrial operations must depend upon the nature of the human efforts which they involve and of the nature of the satisfactions which they serve, it is evident that Ruskin's special knowledge is of paramount importance. Again, Ruskin's literary faculty consists in a fine and accurate discrimination in the use of words, which is of special service in a science where 'masked words' have played such havoc. Although the hunting of root-meanings sometimes carries him into fantastic extravagance, his literary excursions certainly enable him to give force and consistency to many a weak and misused term, and to perform a genuine work of restoration to such words as 'wealth' and 'value.' The full significance of Ruskin's thought is only beginning to grow in the public mind. *Unto this Last* is one of those books which appear a generation before the work is ripe which they can do. The dogmatic structure of political economy which held almost undisputed sway in the middle of this century has broken down, and recent constructive thought is more open to acknowledge the deep services which Ruskin's criticism has conferred, and to accept the definition of the art which he has so accurately worded. The final object of political economy, therefore, is to get good method of consumption, and great quantity of consumption—in other words, to use everything, and to use it nobly, whether it be substance service, or service perfecting substance."

Ruskin takes pride in calling himself a disciple of Carlyle, and as a demolisher of lies, shoddies and

shams, he is as great as his acknowledged master. In one important respect, however, he is a disciple of Mazzini rather than of Carlyle, though he is probably unconscious of his indebtedness to the Italian prophet. Though no man had a profounder admiration for Carlyle's genius than had Mazzini, it was, nevertheless, he who first pointed out that Carlyle was too fond of preaching the doctrine that might is right, and was quite unable to grasp the idea of the collective progress of humanity. Mazzini, however, taught that it is not by right or by might, but by love and by duty, that mankind advance in the direction of that far-off divine event of which Tennyson speaks. "Working men!" "Brothers!" cried Mazzini, "when Christ came and changed the face of the earth and the world, He spoke not of rights to the rich, who needed not to achieve them; nor to the poor, who would doubtless have abused them, in imitation of the rich. He spoke not of utility, nor of interest, to a people whom interest and utility had corrupted. He spoke of Duty, He spoke of Love, of Sacrifice and of Faith; and He said that they should be first among all who had contributed most by their labour to the good of all." Ruskin has enforced the same great truth. The cheerful observance of duty is more truly just than the rigid enforcement of right, and we may thank God that so great a prophet as Ruskin was sent to proclaim this Gospel in an age when, but for such preaching, man would have sunk to the lowest depths of materialism, corruption and greed.

Not the least of Ruskin's great services to humanity has been his exposition of the truth that even commercialism need not be selfish and base, but heroic and ennobling. He says in *Unto this Last*:—"The fact is, that people never have had clearly explained to them the true functions of a merchant with respect to other people. I should like the reader to be very clear about this. Five great intellectual professions, relating to daily necessities of life, have hitherto existed—three exist necessarily in every civilized nation.

"The Soldier's profession is to *defend* it.

"The Pastor's to *teach* it.

"The Physician's to *keep it in health*.

"The Lawyer's to *enforce justice* in it.

"The Merchant's to *provide* for it.

"And the duty of all these men is, on due occasion, to *die* for it.

"'On due occasion,' namely:—

"The Soldier, rather than leave his post in battle.

"The Physician, rather than leave his post in plague.

"The Pastor, rather than teach Falsehood.

"The Lawyer, rather than countenance Injustice.

"The Merchant—what is *his* 'due occasion' of death?

"It is the main question for the merchant as for all of us. For truly, the man who does not know when to die does not know how to live.

"Observe the merchant's function (or manufacturer's, for in the broad sense in which it is here used the word must be understood to include both) is to provide for the nation. It is no more his function to get profit for himself out of that provision than it is a clergyman's function to get his stipend. This stipend is a due and necessary adjunct, but not the object of his life, if he be a true clergyman, any more than his fee or honorarium is the object of life to a true physician. Neither is his fee the object of life to the true merchant. All three, if true men, have a work to be done, irrespective of fee—to be done even at any cost, or for quite the contrary of fee; the pastor's function being to teach, the physician's to heal, and the merchant's to provide. That is to say, he has to understand to their very root the qualities of the thing he deals in, and the means of obtaining or producing it; and he has to apply all his sagacity and energy to the producing or obtaining it in perfect state, and distributing it at the cheapest possible price where it is most needed. And because the production or obtaining of any commodity involves necessarily the agency

of many lives and hands, the merchant becomes in the course of his business the master and governor of large masses of men in a more direct though less confused way than a military officer or pastor, so that on him falls, in great part, the responsibility for the kind of life they lead; and it becomes his duty not only to be always considering how to produce what he sells in the purest and cheapest forms, but how to make the various employments involved in the production, or transference of it, most beneficial to the men employed."

Tolstoy would not agree with Ruskin as to the necessary existence of the soldier; but if we admit that a coercive authority centred somewhere is essential to organized society, we must at any rate regard the soldier as needful, if only for police duty. Ruskin, it will be seen, defines the soldier's duty as exclusively defensive. It is no business of his to be offensive. As regards the other representatives of civilization, Ruskin's views will hardly be disputed. In an ideal state we might do without lawyers and parsons, as well as without soldiers; but in such a state of society we could not do without the distributor. Human happiness, therefore, must largely depend upon the unselfishness and the honour of the trader. Ruskin's views on this, as on most other subjects which he has discussed, bring him into the direct line of descent from the prophets and the apostles. His views for the most part are as yet far in advance of the age, but he is the chief inspirer of the younger men and women whose influence will give the coming century its character. He is a great educator, who has laboured nobly for the realization of his own ideals of education, which he defines to be an answer to the three questions, "Where am I? Whither am I going? What is it best to do under these circumstances?" Surely this is a better definition of education, even than Milton's; and it is upon the effort that society will hereafter make to answer those questions in Ruskin's own way, that the future happiness of mankind depends.

A. E. FLETCHER.





## Walt Whitman

### I

WALT Whitman was born at West Hills, Long Island, on the 31st May, 1819. He was the second of a family of nine children, seven sons and two daughters.

His father, Walter Whitman, the son of a farmer at West Hills, had been a carpenter from the age of fifteen and was a large, serious, quiet man, skilled at his trade, and very fond of children and animals. His ancestors had emigrated from England in 1635 and settled in Long Island about 1660.

Walt Whitman's mother, Louisa, daughter of Major Van Velsor, was of Dutch descent. She was a kindly, cheerful woman, with a full share of good sense, and of a highly spiritual and intuitive nature.

Whitman's works bear strong testimony to his ancestry. They are full of

" . . . the surly English pluck, and there is no tougher or truer, and never was, and never will be";

while their wealth of minute detail, their broad tolerance of all *facts*, their sane transcendentalism recall the great art of Holland, the masterpieces of Frans Hals, of Gerard Dow, of Rembrandt. Much, too, he owes to the place of his birth, the great island, Paumanok;<sup>1</sup> "over a hundred miles long, shaped like a fish—plenty of sea-shore, sandy, stormy, uninviting, the horizon boundless, the air too strong for invalids, the bays a wonderful resort for aquatic birds, the south-side meadows cover'd with salt hay, the soil of

<sup>1</sup> The Indian name for Long Island.

the island generally tough, but good for the locust-tree, the apple-orchard, and the blackberry, and with numberless springs of the sweetest water in the world." <sup>1</sup>

When Whitman was but four years old his parents moved to Brooklyn. Here he grew up, attending the public schools until he was thirteen years of age, when he became office-boy, first in a lawyer's then in a doctor's office. In 1833 he went into a printing-office, and learnt the trade for two years. At the age of seventeen he began to tramp over Long Island, teaching in the country schools, and "boarding round." In 1839 he published and edited the *Long Islander*, a weekly newspaper. In 1840 he came to New York, to live there for the next six years as printer and journalist. Then back again in Brooklyn, editing a daily paper, *The Eagle*. In 1848 we find him at New Orleans on the staff of the *The Crescent*. "About this time [I] went off on a leisurely journey and working expedition (my brother Jeff with me) through all the Middle States, and down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. Lived a while in New Orleans, and worked there. After a time, plodded back northward, up the Mississippi, the Missouri, etc., and around to, and by way of, the great lakes, Michigan, Huron, and Erie, to Niagara Falls and Lower Canada—finally returning through Central New York, and down the Hudson." <sup>2</sup> In 1850 he was back again in Brooklyn, publishing the *Freeman* newspaper. Next year he took to carpentering, and built and sold houses in Brooklyn, but gave it up directly it seemed likely to pay well. "There was a great boom in Brooklyn in the early fifties, and he had his chance then, but you know he made nothing of that chance. Some of us reckoned that he had by this neglect wasted his best opportunity, for no other equally good chance ever after appeared. . . . He had an idea that money was of no consequence." <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Specimen Days in America.*

<sup>2</sup> *Whitman's Diary.*

<sup>3</sup> *Notes of a Conversation with George Whitman.*

In 1855 appeared the first issue of *Leaves of Grass*. It was a thin quarto, of unpretentious appearance, partly printed by the poet himself at the establishment of Andrew and James Rome, Brooklyn. Facing the title was his portrait, a steel engraving from a daguerreotype taken in 1854; the portrait which accompanies the *Song of Myself* in the *final* edition of 1891. Copies of the book were left for sale at the bookshops of New York and Brooklyn, were sent to newspapers and magazine for review, and were presented to prominent literary persons.

The first reception of *Leaves of Grass* was most discouraging. No copies were sold. The press either ignored it, laughed at it, or condemned in scurrilous terms. Some of the writers, who had received copies, returned them with insulting comments.

But such a work could not be entirely ignored. A few months after its publication Emerson wrote to Whitman a letter of warm commendation. "I am not blind," he wrote, "to the worth of the wonderful gift of *Leaves of Grass*. I find it the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom that America has as yet contributed. . . . I greet you at the beginning of a great career, which yet must have had a long fore-ground somewhere, for such a start."

At the earnest solicitation of C. A. Dana, then manager of the *New York Tribune*, Whitman allowed this letter to be published, and printed it in the annex of the enlarged edition which was published in New York in 1866. Then the storm began in earnest. Every pampered poetling, every prudish bourgeois, every pompous editor, in England as well as in America, felt himself insulted by the manliness, the purity, and the democratic sentiment of such a work as this. And such a shriek of execration went up that the publishers withdrew the book and refused to have anything more to do with it; a fate which overtook the work many times. But, from the first, a few of the more far-sighted gave the book a ready welcome: in America, Emerson, Thoreau, and John Burroughs;



in England, Tennyson, Ruskin, James Thomson (B.V.), William Rossetti, Edward Dowden, Robert Buchanan, Edward Carpenter, Anne Gilchrist, Madox Brown, and many more; on the Continent, Freiligrath, Gabriel Sarrazin, Rudolf Schmidt, Th. Bentzon, and many another prominent thinker received with delight the "free and brave thought." The fight has gone on since then, but *Leaves of Grass* is now becoming recognised as one of the world's masterpieces, and it is only belated persons who now think (like the Boston "school-ma'am") that Whitman is "simply a very dirty old man."

Utterly regardless of the fury of the "respectables," Whitman lived quietly at Brooklyn until the outbreak of the Secession War. That event affected his life very greatly. His brother George volunteered and went to the front. In December, 1862, his family heard that he was wounded. Walt Whitman went off to the camp at Rappahannock, nursed him till he recovered, and then went to Washington in charge of some wounded Brooklyn soldiers. There he stayed, nursing the wounded soldiers of both sides and visiting the battle-fields. For three years he remained at Washington, visiting the wounded every day, enduring all the horrible sights of daily occurrence in the over-crowded, under-staffed military hospitals. The intense moral and physical strain of this period undermined his splendid constitution. In 1864 he became seriously ill with "hospital malaria." He went North to rest for a short time, and then returned to his hospital work. In 1865 he received an appointment as a Government clerk at Washington, but was shortly afterwards discharged by the Secretary of the Department of the Interior, in which he was placed, "because he was the author of an indecent book." This monstrous act had, however, little effect on his fortunes, for he immediately received another appointment in the office of the Attorney-General. The disgrace of this tyrannous dismissal, however, will for all time rest on the name of the Secretary, James

Harlan. In 1866 appeared *Drum Taps*, a volume of poems of the civil war, and of memories of President Lincoln. It was afterwards incorporated in *Leaves of Grass*, as were most of his subsequent poems.

For the next eight years he continued to live at Washington, but on the 22nd of February, 1873, he was stricken down with paralysis. In May of the same year his mother died suddenly, and the shock made him much worse. He resigned his clerkship and migrated to Camden (New Jersey), poor, sick, and an apparent failure. But his hopefulness never left him. A small circle of devoted friends helped him to procure the necessities of life, but he never really recovered his health. From 1873 till his death in 1892 he lived at Camden, with varying health and fortune, but with steadily growing fame. In 1882 he published his *prose* works, consisting of selections from his diary, called *Specimen Days in America*, and of various literary and political essays.

During the last five years of his life his health grew steadily worse, and, after some months of pain and weakness, he passed quietly away on the 26th of March, 1892.

"The last twenty years of his existence on the earth," says J. A. Symonds, "were not wasted. They stamped his work as poet and prophet with the seal of indubitable genuineness. Would that all prophets, of Chelsea or elsewhere, could boast a practical commentary so efficient and illuminative of their teaching."<sup>1</sup>

## II

I have sketched the main incidents of Whitman's life because, unlike those of many great writers, it is greatly illuminative of his works. His aim was not to make literature but to present, in as complete a form as possible, the *living* portrait of "a simple, separate person."

<sup>1</sup> *Walt Whitman; A Study.*

"Camerado, this is no book,  
Who touches this touches a man."

And the story of his *Wanderjahre* shows us the great store of experience, extensive and intensive, that he had to draw upon for this purpose. He had travelled over most of the United States, he had worked with his hands and with his brain, he had been through the most terrible civil war of modern times, he had "gone freely" with all persons rich and poor alike, he had known most splendid health and most miserable sickness. And all this rich and varied life he describes in his masterpiece, *Leaves of Grass*, with a wealth of detail, a daring realism, a tender sympathy, and a spiritual insight, unequalled in literature since the sixteenth century.

Walt Whitman has been called the poet of Sex, the poet of America, the poet of Freedom, the poet-prophet of Democracy. All these titles, even the last, are inadequate and may accurately enough be included in a wider title. He is above all, the poet of *Health*; of health physical, moral, political, and spiritual. The athlete, "the towering feminine," same freedom in mind as well as in state,

' The broad blessed light and perfect air, with meadows, rippling  
tides, and trees and flowers and grass,  
And the low hum of living breeze—and in the midst God's  
beautiful eternal right hand,"

such were the themes he delighted in. True, he sang with tender pity and large tolerance of the diseased and deformed, of the outcasts and despised ones of the world, "the laggards by the way"; but it was always with the idea that these too were but arrested in their development and would some day be healthy and sane.

"I saw the face of the most smear'd and slobbering idiot they  
had at the asylum,  
And I knew for my consolation what they knew not,  
I knew of the agents that emptied and broke my brother,  
The same wait to clear the rubbish from the fallen tenement,

And I shall look again in a score or two of ages,  
And I shall meet the real landlord perfect and unharmed,  
every inch as good as myself."

Again,

"Yon dim-descended, black, divine-soul'd African, large, fine-headed, nobly-form'd, *superbly destined*, on equal terms with me!"

And again,

"I do not prefer others so very much before you either,  
I do not say one word against you, away back there where  
you stand.  
(You will come forward in due time to my side.)"

But health is the criterion by which he judges things, health is to him the fundamental law of the universe, health is the precious gift he would fain bring to humanity:—"I say that the profoundest service that poems or any other writings can do for their reader, is not merely to satisfy the intellect, or supply something polished and interesting, nor even to depict great passions, or persons or events, but to fill him with vigorous and clear manliness, religiousness, and give him *good heart* as a radical possession and habit." And by *health* he does not mean any hard-and-fast condition of normality as laid down by conventional moralists and scientists, but something like the Greek conception of *harmony* of balanced and vigorous life:—

"No specification is necessary, all that a male or female does, that is vigorous, benevolent, clean, is so much profit to him or her,  
In the unshakable order of the universe and through the whole scope of it for ever."

And in his treatment of sexual matters, which has been so much discussed and reprobated, Whitman retains this large, frank, tolerant attitude. He has learned to the full the lesson taught to the great Apostle, to "call nothing common or unclean"; and in this he has but followed the example of most of the great teachers and investigators that have en-



riched the world, from the masters of Hebrew literature to prophets of modern science. To Whitman,—

“Welcome is every organ, and attribute of me, and of any man hearty and clean,  
Not an inch, nor a particle of an inch is vile. and none shall be less familiar than the rest.”

And to Whitman as to most deep thinkers:—

“Sex contains all, bodies, souls,  
Meanings, proofs, purities, delicacies, results, promulgations,  
Songs, commands, health, pride, the maternal mystery, the seminal milk,  
All hopes, benefactions, bestowals, all the passions, loves, beauties, delights of the earth,  
All the governments, judges, gods, follow’d persons of the earth,  
These are contain’d in sex as parts of itself, and justifications of itself.”

What could be a more wholesome attitude than this? And, above all, what is there that is more in need of such plain speaking on sexual matters (or indeed on all fundamental subjects), than our effete, foully prurient, hypocritical, present-day society, with its pulpit denunciations of vice and its perpetuation of the causes of vice, its boundless subterranean rottenness and its shame of the human body, which is always the outcome of secret viciousness? Praise rather than blame is due to Whitman, that he has *once for all* withdrawn the filthy veils of prudery, and shown us that—

“If any thing is sacred, the human body is sacred,  
And the glory and sweet of a man is the token of manhood untainted,  
And in man or woman a clean, strong, firm-fibred body, is more beautiful than the most beautiful face.”

Closely connected with his doctrine of love or “amativeness” is his doctrine of comradeship or “adhesiveness.” Round this, too, a fierce controversy has raged; and rightly so, for of all his teaching, this is

perhaps, the most subversive of conventionality. For it is no mere state of mutual convenience (such as the average man of the world dignifies with the name of "friendship"), that Whitman celebrates so triumphantly, but a vigorous, life-long, absorbing passion between persons of the same sex. The poet realizes quite clearly that this passion, like all forms of affection, is based on the sexual nature, and would have us as healthily frank in this case, as the case of "the way of a man with a maid." But it by no means follows that because the basis of an affection is sexual its manifestation is sexual also. Whitman dreams of

"A superb friendship, exalté, previously unknown,"

his aim is the spiritual aim of the Greeks (sanest of nations), the desire—

"My comrade !

For you to share with me two greatneses, and a third one  
 rising inclusive and more resplendent,  
 The greatness of Love and Democracy, and the greatness  
 of Religion."

For him, as for Plutarch, this "manly love of comrades" is a nation's greatest safeguard against tyranny,

"The dependence of Liberty shall be lovers,  
 The continuance of Equality shall be comrades."

For him at the end of the civil war,—

"Over the carnage rose prophetic a voice.  
 Be not dishearten'd, affection shall solve the problems of  
 freedom yet,  
 Those who love each other shall become invincible."

There can be no doubt that this doctrine of "adhesiveness" is the foundation of Whitman's ideas on Democracy. Thus we find—

"Lo, where arise three peerless stars,  
 To be thy natal stars, my country, *Ensemble*, Evolution  
 Freedom,  
 Set in the sky of law";

and—

“Without extinction is Liberty, without retrograde is Equality,  
They live in the *feelings* of young men and the best women”;

again,

“Already a nonchalant breed, silently emerging, appears on the streets,  
People’s lips salute only doers. *lovers*, satisfiers, positive knowers”;

and again,

“The place where a great city stands is . . .  
Where the city of the faithfulest friends stands;  
These shall tie you and band you stronger than hoops of iron,  
O, ecstatic, O partners! O lands! *with the love of lovers tie you.*”

Those worthy persons who profess to welcome his democratic teaching, but to regret the teaching grouped under the heading *Calamus*, must find his great poem, *For You O Democracy*, difficult to reconcile with their profession—

“Come, I will make the continent indissoluble,  
I will make the most splendid race the sun ever shone upon,  
I will make divine magnetic lands;  
With the love of comrades,  
With the life-long love of comrades.

“I will plant companionship thick as trees along all the rivers of America, and along the shores of the great lakes, and all over the prairies,  
I will make inseparable cities with their arms about each other’s necks,  
By the love of comrades,  
By the manly love of comrades.

“*For you these from me, O Democracy, to serve you ma femme;*  
For you, for you I am trilling *these* songs.”

And “these songs” are the section entitled *Calamus*! But though it is clear enough that Whitman’s

democratic teaching is based on passionate friendship, it is not so clear what he means by the word *Democracy*. For at first sight his admiration for democracy and all its works seems to contradict his militant individualism, his fierce assertion of the right of every individual to be governed by none but himself. His ideal city—

“Where the men and women think lightly of the laws.  
Where the slave ceases, and the master of slaves ceases,  
Where the populace rise at once against the never-ending  
audacity of elected persons,  
Where fierce men and women pour forth as the sea to the  
whistle of death pours its sweeping and unripped waves,  
Where outside authority enters always after the precedence  
of inside authority,  
Where the citizen is always the head and ideal, and President,  
Mayor, Governor and what not, are agents for  
pay,”

is not easily reconciled with his quiet acceptance of—

“The final *ballot*-shower from East to West—the paradox and  
conflict,  
The countless snow-flakes falling—(a swordless *conflict*,  
Yet more than all Rome’s wars of old, or modern  
Napoleon’s:) the peaceful choice of all,  
Or good or ill humanity—welcoming the darker odds, the  
dross”:

or with his glorification of the supreme *Nation* in  
*Thou Mother with thy Equal Brood*.

But the contradiction is more apparent than real. The average American, it is true, seems to be dominated from his youth up, by what a recent writer calls “the fallacy of atomism”; the mistaken idea that it is possible (or even desirable) that *every* person should, by the light of every-day experience and of nature, become so conversant with the intricate workings of modern public administration, as to be *capable* of choosing the best person to fill any special public office, or of deciding whether any special law will conduce to good government or not. This idea, the legacy of eighteenth-century radicalism, is the basis of many



modern proposals for reform; its natural outcome is that most anti-democratic of institutions, the caucus. But Whitman, wiser than the generality of his compatriots, was neither the slave of a word nor of an idea. True, in unwary moments, he inclined slightly towards the national fallacy (*e.g.* his belief in the value of "small holdings"), for no man can entirely escape the influence of his environment; but in general he saw the necessity of national *organisation*, with its concomitant the *subordination* of individuals for national purposes. The *organic* nature of modern society was to him an axiom of political philosophy.

" . . . my body no more inevitably united, part to part, and *made out of a thousand diverse contributions one identity*, any more than my lands are inevitably united and ONE IDENTITY."

But the truth is that Whitman did not trouble himself much about *political* questions. Democracy was for him chiefly a *social* matter, Individualism chiefly a *spiritual* question. His *democratic* formula was—

"I speak the pass-word primeval, I give the sign of democracy,  
By God! *I will accept nothing which all cannot have their counterpart of on the same terms*";

and—

"I do not call one greater and one smaller,  
*That which fills its period and place is equal to any.*"

His *individualistic* formula was—

"Have you thought there could be but a single supreme?  
*There can be any number of supremes—one does not countervail another any more than one eyesight countervails another, or one life countervails another.*

All is eligible to all,

All is for individuals, all is for you,

No condition is prohibited, not God's or any.

All comes by the body, only health puts you rapport with the universe.

*Produce great Persons, the rest follows*";

and—

“ Underneath all, individuals,  
I swear nothing is good to me now that ignores individuals,  
The American compact is altogether with individuals,  
The only government is that which makes minute of individuals,  
*The whole theory of the universe is directed to one single individual—namely to You.*”

It is in this last line that we get a glimpse of Whitman's religious thought, the mental attitude towards things universal which underlies the whole of his teaching. It is in his religion that Whitman's depth and sanity of thought become most apparent. Of him beyond all men may it be said that he “greeted the unseen with a cheer.” A *healthy* optimism based on a *sane* mysticism was the religious philosophy that shaped his life and his writings. This to some may sound like a contradiction in terms, but a slight study of *Leaves of Grass* must soon disabuse them of that idea. No impartial student of Whitman's works can doubt either his healthiness or his thoroughness, nor can there be question of his optimism and his mystical view of things. Here is no pious “hoping for the best,” no weak begging of the question to satisfy one's fears for “the future life,” but a strong acceptance of things as they are, a clear appreciation of the more hopeless aspects of the world, confronted with an unshaken faith in the fitness of things, a belief in the endless growth and amelioration of all. His is no muddled belief in the unthinkable, no melodramatic delight in worn-out “mystic, wonderful” dreams, but a sane recognition of the mystery that enwraps the commonest objects, a fine conviction that this intricate world is not completely explicable by the mechanical formulæ of materialism. But it is not against any form of materialist *philosophy* that Whitman tilted. It was the materialistic habit of mind, the infidelism really underlying conventional religious profession against which he waged his crusade. The sordid, money-grubbing view of the world

that is the *real* creed of "the practical man, who can't stand nonsense"; the tacit assumption of the base tendency of all things, that is so often the excuse for "other-worldliness," the life-long denial of the spirit of Christianity, coupled with polite or fanatical acceptance of Christian dogma; these he hated and scorned as only a strong and honest man can. True, he pitied the "bat-eyed and materialistic priests," and

"The little plentiful manikins skipping around in collars and tail'd coats,"

just as he sang in pity

"Of the President with pale face asking secretly to himself,  
'What will the people say at last?'  
Of the frivolous Judge—of the corrupt Congressman, Governor,  
Mayor—of such as these standing helpless and exposed,  
Of the mumbling and screaming priest,"

but it was the enslaved soul he pitied, the stunted personality that is the outcome of all superstitions, social or religious. For meanness, for lying, for hysterical or hypocritical fear of realities, for cringing to the unknown, he had no pity but only measureless scorn and disgust:

"Long enough have you dream'd contemptible dreams,  
Now I wash the gum from your eyes  
You must habit yourself to the dazzle of the light and of every  
moment of your life.  
Long have you timidly waded holding a plank by the shore,  
Now I will you to be a bold swimmer,  
To jump off in the midst of the sea, rise again, nod to me,  
shout, and laughingly dash with your hair."

I have said that Whitman possessed a *healthy* optimism. I mean by this that he was not one to be content with an easy-going belief that "all will come right in the end." His faith rested on a firmer basis. Before the publication of Darwin's great works had made the world familiar with the idea of evolution, Whitman was a convinced evolutionist. Without adhering to any special school as to the *methods* of

evolution, he believed firmly both in the organic connection of all living things, and in the constant development and change of all creation. He was no teleologist, he did not conceive a growth towards some preconceived pattern or "ideal," but a steady unending development, in which the difference between better and worse, higher and lower, was not absolute, but *a difference of degree of growth*. A splendid passage in the *Song of Myself* gives an epitome of this belief:

"I am an acme of things accomplish'd, and I an encloser of things to be.

My feet strike an apex of the apices of the stairs,  
On every step bunches of ages, and larger bunches between the steps.

All below duly travell'd, and still I mount and mount.

Rise after rise bow the phantoms behind me,

Afar down I see the huge first Nothing, I know I was even there,

I waited unseen and always, and slept through the lethargic mist,

And took my time, and took no hurt from the fetid carbon.

Long I was hugg'd close—long and long.

Immense have been the preparations for me,

Faithful and friendly the arms that have help'd me.

Cycles ferried my cradle, rowing and rowing like cheerful boatmen,

For room to me stars kept aside in their own rings,

They sent influences to look after what was to hold me.

Before I was born out of my mother generations guided me,

My embryo has never been torpid, nothing could overlay it.

For it the nebula cohered to an orb,

The long slow strata piled to rest it on,

Vast vegetables gave it sustenance,

Monstrous sauroids transported it in their mouths and deposited it with care.

All forces have been steadily employ'd to complete and delight me,

Now on this spot I stand with my robust soul."

Is it possible to chant with greater triumph the dignity of humanity? And the *endless* growth of the human spirit (the "*what you are*") he dreams of later in the same poem:



"This day before dawn I ascended a hill and look'd at the crowded heaven,  
 And I said to my spirit, *When we become the enfolders of those orbs, and the pleasure and knowledge of every thing in them, shall we be fill'd and satisfied then?*  
 And my spirit said, *No, we but level that lift to pass and continue beyond.*"

But his "beyond" is not the endless, idle peace of monkish dreams, nor the vapid, material "Heaven" of modern orthodox Christianity, but more like Browning's virile,

" . . . strive, fight onward; then as now!"

For him as for the scientist, life means motion not rest, battle not peace.

"Now understand me well—it is provided in the essence of things that from any fruition of success, no matter what, shall come forth something to make a greater struggle necessary."

But this, it will be objected, is rank pessimism! Perhaps it may seem so to the weak-kneed, sickly, nerve-wracked product of our hurried and aimless civilization, but it would not have so seemed to our strenuous forefathers, who longed for Valhalla, nor will it so seem to the greater race who will build a larger life upon the foundations we are feverishly laying for them. It is the optimism that postulates the *healthy* soul looking joyously forward to the vigorous battle of *life*, not the pessimism of the *morbid* soul longing wearily for the painless sleep of *death*. For the fever and "growing-pains" of man's adolescence the followers of Jesus gave the blessed drug of Christianity: now man is nearly in full health and growth, and needs spiritual meat and drink, not sleeping-draughts. Whitman would have us wake and live;

"For I myself am not one who bestows nothing upon man and woman,  
 For I bestow upon *any* man or woman the entrance to all the gifts of the universe."

Out of his belief in evolution towards good arose his doctrines of evil and of immortality. For him evil was but undeveloped good, or rather a survival of what had once been good. As the world grows evil is slowly sloughed off and replaced by or changed into good, which in its turn may pass through like stages :

" Ever the dim beginning,  
Ever the growth, the rounding of the circle,  
Ever the summit and the merge at last (to surely start again),  
Eidólous ! Eidólous ! "

But he knows that history does *not* repeat itself, and later corrects this image of "the rounding of the circle" ;

" In *spiral* routes by long detours, . . . .  
. . . . the real to the ideal tends " :

*i.e.* similar circumstances arise to those which have before arisen, but on a higher plane. Whitman's study of Hegel fixed his belief in the progress of all things towards amelioration :

" Roaming in thought over the Universe, I saw the little that is  
Good steadily hastening towards immortality,  
And the vast all that is call'd Evil I saw hastening to merge  
itself and become lost and dead."

But the "hastening" of the Universe is all too slow if a man is but a mechanism that works for a short time and then stops for ever. Whitman would meet this objection with a defiant assertion of immortality. For when

" The grass of spring covers the prairies,  
The bean bursts noiselessly through the mould in the garden,  
The delicate spear of the onion pierces upward,  
The apple-buds cluster together on the apple-branches,  
The resurrection of the wheat appears with pale visage out of  
its graves,  
The tinge awakes over the willow-tree and the mulberry-tree,  
The he-birds carol mornings and evenings while the she-birds  
sit on their nests,  
The young of poultry break through the hatch'd eggs,  
The new-born of animals appear, the calf is dropt from the  
cow, the colt from the mare, . . . ."

he sees constant evidence of physical and perhaps spiritual resurrection. But he is not satisfied, and would not have us satisfied with this vague impersonal sort of immortality. Again and again we are assured that the immortality is personal. Whitman has not shown very clearly what he means by personality, but a constant use is made of the same terms ("the soul," "identity," "you yourself," "what you are") to express that in *all* things which continues eternally. For he does not restrict the idea of immortality to the human race, he extends it to all things, inorganic as well as organic :

"I swear I think now that every thing without exception  
has an eternal soul!

The trees have, rooted in the ground! the weeds of the sea  
have! the animals!

I swear I think there is nothing but immortality!

That the exquisite scheme is for it, and the nebulous float is  
for it, and the cohering is for it!

And all preparation is for it—and identity is for it—and life  
and materials are altogether for it"!

Herein is something of the Eastern idea of transmigration, together with something of the Western ideas of indestructibility, of force and energy, and of evolution. At any rate, he ascribes to "every thing without exception" a personality, an "identity" that is eternal, universal, unchangeable.

"Each of us inevitable,

Each of us limitless—each of us with his or her right upon  
the earth,

Each of us allow'd the eternal purports of the earth,

Each of us here as *divinely* as any is here."

In that word "*divinely*" we come upon that sane mysticism which lies at the root of all Whitman's thought. It is this which gives him his deep reverence for all things great and small, it is this which gives him his freedom from fear of death, it is this which gives him his confidence that all things make for good. Further, it is this mystic view of all things that renders him not easy to understand for nine-

teenth-century readers, who, for the most part, are trained to "think" either in the groove of mechanical philosophy or in the ruts of ill-considered tradition.

How Whitman came to be a master of mystic thought is not definitely told us (can such things be fully recorded?), but probably the insight was due largely to that "coming of cosmic consciousness" when he was about thirty years old, as Dr. Bucke records, when

"Swift arose and spread around me the *peace* and *knowledge* that pass all the argument of the earth."

Whitman's mystic teaching is, of course, not new. It is the same as has been given by most of the great philosophers and seers from the times of which we first have record. But it is delivered in a form more suited to the modern world, and with a force and directness of expression before unequalled. The unknown prophet of knowledge in the Hebrew Scripture had foretold that "ye shall be as gods"; the cosmogonists of most nations had shown that their heroes were of divine origin; the gentle seer of Nazareth had startled his contemporaries with the dictum, "I and my Father are *one*." It was Walt Whitman who first declared in unmistakable words that *every being*, however apparently debased or undeveloped, *is now potentially, and ultimately will be actually* DEITY ITSELF.

"I have said that the soul is not more than the body,  
And I have said that the body is not more than the soul,  
And *nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is.*"

"*I hear and behold God in every object*, yet understand  
God not in the least,  
Nor do I understand who there can be more wonderful than  
myself."

"What do you suppose I would intimate to you in a hundred  
ways but that *man or woman is as good as God?*  
And that *there is no God any more divine than Yourself?*"

"It is the central urge in *every atom*,  
(Often unconscious, often evil, downfallen),



To return to *its divine source and origin*, however distant, Latent the same in subject and in object, without one exception."

"I only am He who places over you no master, owner, better, God, *beyond what waits intrinsically in yourself.*"

"To be *this incredible God I am!*

To have gone forth among *other Gods, these men and women I love.*"

And the same idea occurs again and again in that wonderful poem, "Chanting the Square Deific" (*i.e.* the God-imaging square), wherein every word has its full force and most direct meaning. In this poem occur such phrases as, "Jehovah am *I*, Old Brahm *I*, and *I* Saturnius am," or, "*I* am affection, *I* am the cheer-bringing God," or, "Defiant, *I*, Satan, still live," or, again :

"Life of the great round world, the sun and stars, and of man, *I, the general soul.* . . ."

Further, it is this same recognition of Deity that causes his constant use of such phrases as "the Divine average," "the profound lesson of reception," "Heavenly Death," "red, white, black, are all *deific*," "the great individual," "nothing else but miracles," "the democratic wisdom"; or that inspires such semi-grotesque, semi-sublime passages as :—

"Lads ahold of fire-engines and hook-and-ladder ropes no less to me than the gods of the antique wars,  
Minding their voices peal through the crash of destruction,  
Their brawny limbs passing safe over charr'd laths, their  
white foreheads whole and unhurt out of the flames;  
. . . the mechanic's wife with her babe at her nipple  
interceding for every person born,  
Three scythes at harvest whizzing in a row from three lusty  
angels with shirts bagg'd out at their waists,  
The snag-tooth'd hostler with red hair redeeming sins past  
and to come,  
Selling all he possesses, travelling on foot to fee lawyers for  
his brother and sit by him while he is tried for forgery."

Of course such doctrine as this makes "the practical

person" murmur abusive remarks like "Madness!" "Ego-mania!" "Misty rubbish!" etc.; but, as a practical man means one who is constitutionally incapable of departing from conventions laid down for him by his more commonplace predecessors, his opinion need not have great weight as regards our opinion of Whitman's mysticism. *The Divine nature of the Universe and of every separate part of the Universe* is anyhow Whitman's basic religious idea, and so large and daring a philosophy cannot be dismissed lightly with a contemptuous doubt as to its author's sanity. More than a century ago Blake gave utterance to a similar religious belief, and the world is at last beginning to recognise the folly of treating him as a pleasing madman. It were well not to forget the close parallel, that Mr. Swinburne has pointed out, between Blake and Whitman.

It was this religious belief that formed Whitman's life and the poems that grew out of his life. His belief in America, his championship of the "despised persons," his vision of a glorious future for the world, all are traceable to this. What he believed to be his mission he himself tells us:—

"The prophet and the bard,  
Shall yet maintain themselves in higher stages yet,  
Shall mediate to the Modern, to Democracy, interpret yet to  
them,  
God and eidólous."

And what his own life had been he himself may tell us also:—

"Give me the pay I have served for,  
Give me to sing the songs of the great Idea, take all the rest,  
I have loved the earth, sun, animals, I have despised riches,  
I have given alms to every one that ask'd, stood up for the  
stupid and crazy, devoted my income and labour to others,  
Hated tyrants, argued not concerning God, had patience and  
indulgence toward the people, taken off my hat to nothing  
known or unknown,  
Gone freely with powerful uneducated persons and with the  
young, and with the mothers of families,

Read these leaves to myself in the open air, tried them by  
 trees, stars, rivers,  
 Dismiss'd whatever insulted my own soul or defiled my body,  
 Claim'd nothing to myself which I have not carefully claim'd  
 for others on the same terms,  
 Sped to the camps, and comrades found and accepted from  
 every State,  
 (Upon this breast has many a dying soldier lean'd to breathe  
 his last,  
 This arm, this hand, this voice, have nourish'd, rais'd,  
 restored,  
 To life recalling many a prostrate form;)   
 I am willing to wait to be understood by the growth of the  
 taste of myself,  
 Rejecting none, permitting all."

### III

I have endeavoured, in the foregoing pages, to give some idea of Whitman's titanic thought, or rather to try and make Whitman explain himself. But it is impossible to compress the essential gospel of a great and original thinker within the limits of a short essay. To really "come at" Whitman's teaching his own works must be read, and that not once only, but many times. But Whitman presents peculiar difficulties to the student. In the first place, it must be remembered that he writes much in the American vernacular, and his works are studded with words and phrases and allusions not immediately "understood of the people" in this country. Besides this it must be confessed that Whitman's *prose* works are written in a style that is perhaps the most irritating and obscure in modern literature. On the other hand his poems are beautiful, generally exceedingly so, and always with a curious music and dignity of their own. But their form is very unusual, and is at first a stumbling-block to those readers who are used to metre and rhyme. Lastly, throughout the *Leaves of Grass*, there are passages which, besides their immediate meaning, have other meanings not at first perceived, with perhaps yet deeper meanings underlying those.

All this means that Whitman must be *studied*, not skimmed over carelessly. And, with passages that seem harsh or incomprehensible, it is well to read them *aloud* and, if possible, *in the open air*. As Whitman himself said, "It makes such a difference *where* you read"; and, just as in Wagner's music-dramas much is meaningless without the stage-picture or any other of the component factors, much of the meaning of *Leaves of Grass* lies in the *sound* of the poems and their environment.

LESLIE A. ST. L. TOKE.





## William Morris

THE claim of William Morris to be included in this volume of pioneers rests upon his genius as a craftsman rather than upon his literary or social work. And yet, no man's personality was so completely one in all its aspects as that of Morris. Craftsman, poet, socialist, he was one and the same person. The Norse simplicity and ruggedness which you saw in him swaying along a street in front of you, with his broad back clad in navy blue, and his ample grey hair falling from beneath his soft, wide-brimmed felt hat, the bushy edges of his beard showing over his shoulder, was the man in his temper and genius—a hero born centuries after his time, whose eyes were full of the freshness of those eyes that looked from Greece on more Arcadian days, or from Norway on more boisterous ones than the nineteenth century has to show; whose mind was textured like the rough, honest hempen rope that braced the masts of a Norse galley, and yet was as fine as the threads that Penelope wove. His dislike for Browning and Milton, and his warm appreciation of the earlier literature of Greece and the Norse legends, were again but aspects of that simple constitution of which a rugged spontaneity was the keynote. Much less even than Rossetti was Morris a child of this century, and yet, infinitely more than most men's, has his influence upon it been.

### I.

It is very significant that the Socialist movement should have attached to it a distinct school of art, and, in view of some of the criticisms that are fre-

quently hurled at that movement, it is specially noteworthy that the art of that school should be the art of *good* work—of a good work that can best be described by the general term “craftsmanship.” The association of the Socialist movement with an artistic revival is too intimate to be explained by any assumption of accident or mere personal influence, and we must regard the work and opinions of such men as William Morris and Walter Crane as anything but two disconnected interests in their lives. Remote in spirit and in circumstance as shouting at a street corner or wresting the right of freedom of speech from police and police magistrates, and designing tapestries or planning Kelmscott press volumes may seem to the casual observer, the one and the other, when done by a man like William Morris, are but different ways of expressing the same imperium.

With Morris, more than with most men, many-sidedness is a sign not of dissipated energy but of sleepless vital force. He was poet, artist, social reformer, it is true; but he delivered his opinions nervously pacing up and down his room, the phrasing of his lectures is coloured by blunt, strong expressions such as those he uses in his *Aims of Art* for the authorities who permitted Oxford to be desecrated, his temper was volatile and explosive, neither mind nor body could rest. His labours and his manner cannot be separated. His activities came not from fickleness but from superabundance of life, and they require to be traced to some common source, however varied they may seem. Morris was the last man in the world to be moved by the whimsical and accidental. His life was centred. “What man,” says Mr. Buxton Forman, “ever so joyed, so revelled, in twenty different methods of work as William Morris did?” And that is just it. His activities were all *methods* of conducting one crusade.

These are the thoughts that introduce themselves when we begin to think of William Morris as Master. It is very tempting to turn and give reasons for Swin-

burne's unstinted praise of Morris's literary work as such—"Even against the great master (Chaucer) his pupil may fairly be matched for simple sense of right, for grace and speed of step, for purity and justice of colour. In all the noble roll of our poets there has been since Chaucer no second teller of tales, no second rhapsode comparable to the first, till the advent of this one"; or, it would be equally pleasant to present Morris as Mary Howitt thought of him: "The art of William Morris is nature itself, rough at times, but quaint, fresh and dewy beyond anything I ever saw or felt in language." But that is not quite the purpose of this paper. The study made here is one of the quality and character of William Morris's democracy. And yet, if we are to understand Morris the democratic prophet aright, we must meet him not on the pages of his defunct *Commonweal* nor in his pamphlets, nor on the platform, not even in his socialist songs. The man with an artistic spirit—a spirit the sorrow of which comprehends in its broad sweep the sorrow of ages, and the joy of which embraces the hope of humanity—this man expresses himself most truly, not when he is delivering propagandist lectures, not when he is arguing and debating, but when he is alone with himself, and his being is responding to the thrills of spontaneous feeling. His mind plays its own tune, fitful maybe in its strength and faltering in its measure, but a tune which is characteristic. And so, when the poet becomes politician and economist, in studying the quality of his speeches and pamphlets, we can go further back in mental origins than we can with common mortals. Our ordinary politicians tell us why they took this side or that, and we find that some trivial reason determined them, and, looking behind their professions and deeds, we may discover that at heart they are the opposite of what they are labelled to the world. But the politics of our poets, the Radical tracts of Shelley, the Greek sympathies of Byron, the Conservatism of Wordsworth, the Socialism of Morris, are determined for them by the very same



influences that decided whether they were to sing lyrics or write epics. The poet's mind is not to be found in the poet's preaching so truly as in the poet's singing.

## II

That, at any rate, is perfectly evident in the case of William Morris. His Socialist position was pre-eminently because of his poetic and artistic qualities. In his biography there is nothing making for Socialism. He was born of a well-to-do family; he was educated at Marlborough and Oxford. No outward pressure compelled him to cross over and enlist in the ranks of those discontented ones who can see no hope of economic justice being done until certain fundamental social changes have been made. Nor on the other hand did he undergo that process of intellectual conviction which has been responsible for so many recruits to the Socialist ranks that they cannot in justice be called a class muster; nor even did he as a philanthropic humanitarian see the travail of his brother's soul and feel dissatisfied. His one impulse in growing from the author of the *Earthly Paradise* to the singer of *The Day is Coming* was his artistic sensibilities. He was an indifferent student at Oxford, but read the classics with the spasmodic and pagan love of one who was to add to our own literature, and took special interest in what mediæval lore he could lay his hands on. The college buildings were of a more educational value to him than the class lectures and text books. His friend in all his ways was Mr. Burne Jones—then studying for the church; and when he met Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Holman Hunt, a point and definiteness was given to his inclinations, and he was enlisted in that artistic campaign which has done more than anything else to sweeten and beautify modern life. At one time it was doubtful what department of art work Morris would adopt as his own. Whilst at Oxford he saddled him-

self with the proprietary responsibilities of a monthly magazine—the *Oxford and Cambridge Review*—and wrote liberally for it. He naturally adopted the artistic medium of painting in which his immediate friends were working with so much distinction, but he seems to have given that up very soon after discovering that it was not suited to his genius. At least one picture is in existence by him, showing, so those who have seen it say, a remarkable sense of appropriate colouring, and he was for a short time apprenticed to Street, to whose genius we owe the Law Courts in the Strand. But he finally settled down to literature and decorative art. His first book, *The Defence of Guenevere*, was published in 1859; and shortly afterwards, before his apprenticeship was complete, he started in business as dealer in artistic furnishings. The book fell flat from the press—as flat as a book of genius usually does; but the shop prospered.

Thus we see the stuff of which Morris the Master was made. He had become servant to Chaucer; he had come under the glamour of Malory and Froissart; his mind had been filled with the beauties of Gothic. He had imbibed the spirit of beauty from Greek models and had blended with it the pagan robustness and romance of the Norse legends; and his circumstances invited him to combine both in a new art movement, the chief characteristics of which were a return to nature, and an elevation of the idea of labour.

### III

A mind constituted and trained as Morris's was, looking upon the world for the first time in the fifties, would have been struck with the utter foreignness of its surroundings. Instead of its Athenian types of grace it would have seen nothing but an effete aristocracy, a vulgarised moneyed class, and a brutalised and dehumanised democracy. It would have seen nature being ravished by the factory smoke cloud, refuse heap

and sordid town, and every æsthetic feeling strangled by the brutalities of a money-making utilitarianism. The architecture of the modern street would have jarred upon it—Morris called it the architecture of the brick box with the slate lid—and the decoration inside would have been equally repulsive to it. Wherever man tried to express his sense of beauty, wherever taste came in, from literature to Sunday attire, such a mind would have seen little that was not repulsive, little but what was a ghastly failure. An odd artist here and there would have been no recompense to this mind for the prevailing lack of good taste; nor would an occasional Rouen or Oxford obscure the ugliness of modern towns. The natural first position of such a person would have been social pessimism, and in proportion to the thoroughness with which he had drunk at the springs of classical views of life, his pessimism would not be confined to society, but to living. The artist who is of the order which loves the beautiful rather than believes in it, who is consequently able to criticise the shortcomings of experience without being able to fill up the gaps and make smooth the rough places by the creations of his own faith, is either left stranded on the barren shores of the Land of Hopelessness, or transported in chariots of fire to the land of the Impractical Ideal.

William Morris's genius left him stranded to begin with. There is a wistfulness about the genuine disciple of the æsthetic movement which hangs round him like the atmosphere which Dante took with him from the shades. It is a wistfulness of the days that are gone—their imagined freedom, their imagined beauty, their imagined romance—a sighing that life has now become intellectual and serious, as though it had entered a twilight fast hastening upon the unhappy shades of night, as though all its people were frosty-haired and bent backed. Turn whithersoever they may, the shadow of Death is upon everything, and the foot of hurrying Time echoes everywhere. Moreover the maker of man is Fate.

"And what the dawn has fated on the hour of noon shall fall."

Love alone compensates and consoles, and yet Love too passes. "'Tis for a little while." This was the social and moral note of pre-Raphaelism—the beauty of weariness, of sadness, of a hope that had never fully come. This gives colour and motion to Morris's earliest work. In *The Defence of Guenevere*, dedicated very appropriately "To my friend, Dante Gabriel Rossetti," he put into literature the spirit and technique that Rossetti and Millais were putting upon canvas. The *Haystack in the Floods* is an admirable specimen of such work. One must imagine some of these pre-Raphaelite pictures—the maidens, the knights, and the landscapes—and read this:—

"Along the dripping leafless woods,  
The stirrup touching either shoe,  
She rode astride as troopers do,  
With kirtle kilted to her knee,  
To which the mud splashed wretchedly;  
And the wet dripped from every tree  
Upon her head and heavy hair,  
And on her eyelids broad and fair;  
The tears and rain ran down her face."

Or this, which is as characteristic of another pre-Raphaelite picture subject:

"A great God's angel standing with such dyes,  
Not known on earth on his great wings and hands,  
Held out two ways—light from the inner skies

"Showing him well, and making his commands  
Seem to be God's command. Moreover, too,  
Holding within his hands the cloths on wands:

"And one of these strange choosing cloths was blue,  
Wavy and long, and one cut short and red;  
No man could tell the better of the two."

But it was when the *Earthly Paradise* was published that the full social significance of Morris's genius was discovered. The prefixed apology, written years before the poet had heard the word socialism,



contains the gist of everything he has ever said on the state of modern society :

"The heavy trouble, the bewildering care  
That weighs us down who live and earn our bread,  
These idle verses have no power to bear ;  
So let me sing of names remembered,  
Because they, living not, can ne'er be dead,  
Or long time take their memory quite away  
From us poor singers of an empty day."

The opening of the poem shows again how very little Morris learned from his Socialist teachers :

"Forget six centuries overhung with smoke,  
Forget the snorting steam and piston stroke,  
Forget the spreading of the hideous town."

But in those days he could but build

"A shadowy isle of bliss  
Midmost the beating of the steely sea,  
Where tossed about the hearts of all men must be :  
Whose ravening monsters mighty men shall slay,  
Not the poor singer of an empty day."

Without a social faith linking the lives of all men together and bidding the singer lift up his eyes and see glories ahead as inspiring as those that met the eye of the seer on Patmos, he could but regard this life as a fleeting vanity, a disappointment and a pain, and the individual as but a discontented entity amidst a chaos of care. His outlook was so short that he was unable to think of Paradise as being anything more than a realm sacred from Time and Death. The pupil of Chaucer he undoubtedly was in everything but the time of his singing. The bright joy of morning lay over everything which Chaucer wrote ; Morris's notes were rich with the sad glory of sunset. And so it was that he built this paradise of his from the thoughts and experiences of a handful of men who fled from a land of plague in search of an island "across the western sea where none grow old."

The first country to which the wanderers come is very lovely, and the people regard them as gods and

offer up sacrifices to them. But it is a land of death, and so not the place of their quest. They escape, and, after many adventures, come to an island inhabited by descendants of the ancient Greeks. Here they are received with hospitality, and at the beginning and middle of each month they feast with the elders. At each of these feasts a tale is told, at one time by a Greek, by a Norseman the next. The story of the wanderings and the tales told form the material of the *Earthly Paradise*.

So far, the evolution of his democracy has been down in hidden foundations and not in its upper and more familiar aspects. But it has gone thus far. His artistic sense has made him discontented, and his discontent is directed mainly to the ugly town, with its dull streets, hideous houses, and overhanging smoke pall. He has also penetrated into the human life of the town, and finds that it so much lacks spontaneity and freedom and joy that the burden of his æsthetic sorrows is increased. His genius so far has drawn him into sympathy with the people, although it has not yet led him to identify himself with them. At this time his political opinions seem to have been a Toryism which hankered after a benevolent despot.

He has reached the stage when he has exhausted the possibilities of the worship of beauty as a social guide. As an inspiration it is invaluable, as an end it is impotent. It can make a man discontented; it cannot direct his energies. It will turn him out into the city crying, "Woe is me!" but it puts no message of salvation into his mouth. "Friends," says Morris, "the days are evil: death will come. Let us spend the time as we best can. No thoughtful man can be glad. Beauty can come and minister a sad peace unto us. Let us sing, let us love, let us dwell with the culture of the dead past that never dies." He had advanced no further in 1870 than would justify Mr. Austin saying that he then was "the serene martyr of a mean and melancholy time."

In *Sigurd*, the best of his poems in his own esti-

mation, his democratic faith evolved a further stage. The Norse saga, however chaotic it may seem to the casual reader, always pointed a moral, and the stories of Sigurd and Siegfried were the most famous of all the sagas. There are various versions of these tales, but the chief are the mediæval German version, which has taken considerable liberties with the legends, the stories as told by Wagner in his "Ring of the Niblungs," and Morris's version, which follows the ancient story pretty closely. But in none of the versions is the moral of the original tales obscured, although in Morris's it is brought into special prominence. They tell that the love of gold is a sinful and disastrous lust. The story as Morris tells it is briefly this: Sigurd slew Fafnir, a dragon, and became possessed of the treasure which Fafnir was guarding. This treasure included a ring and "a helm of aweing." The victor also, by tasting the blood of the dragon, was able to understand the language of birds, and learned from an eagle of a very beautiful maiden who lay sleeping on the top of Hindfell, surrounded by a circuit of fire. Sigurd reached her resting place and awaked her. They lived together for a time on the Hindfell, and then Sigurd, after plighting eternal troth, left her for further adventures. South of the Rhine he came to the land of the Niblungs, and, under the influence of a love potion, fell madly in love with Gudrun, sister to the kings. He even forgot Brynhild's name under the spell, and undertook to secure a marriage between the sleeping maiden and the brother of his new love. In this he was successful. Then follow the usual slaughterings as the plot unwinds itself, and Morris, following out the story after Wagner has left it, finishes his tale with the battles and killings over the treasure which Sigurd discovered. The possession of this treasure was the cause of all the trouble. It was cursed from the beginning, and the moral is the common moral of all Norse tales in which gold plays a part. Gold and the thirst for gold was the sign of a fateful life, and it is not at all a straining of possi-

bilities to suggest that the special moral of this tale, coinciding with the development of Morris's own democratic instincts, determined in some measure its selection as the subject of a poem. It was becoming more and more apparent to him that the curse of his time was its superfluous wealth, which was leading it to ostentation and its accompaniment, brutal vulgarity. When he put it in Sigurd's mouth to say to the King of the Niblungs:

And I would that the loving were loved, and I would that  
the weary should sleep,  
And that man should hearken to man, and that he that soweth  
should reap,

he meant a good deal more than to sigh the sigh of the pre-Raphaelite.

Here, we may take it, his literary training ended. Chastened (only very slightly, however, as is seen in his failure to preserve the Greek spirit in his translations of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*) by Greek ideals, paganised by Norse views of life, toned by mediæval romance, we find Morris definitely beginning to shake off his pessimism as his artistic revolt began to shape for itself causes and effects, and carry him from a purely artistic atmosphere into one of the intellect and morals.

#### IV

But Morris the craftsman, it must be remembered, had been for some time the guide of Morris the poet. Ruskin had filled him with a loathing of the ugliness surrounding the modern person of every rank, and had taught him to protest not only against the ravishes of commercialism on nature, but upon its bad effect on the chaste and the beautiful in life. He had also led him to consider the moral and artistic effect of joyous labour. In 1861 Morris started the business of art designer, which is still in existence, and every article of beauty, from a stool to a tapestry, became a legitimate subject of trade for the firm and



of study for its most distinguished partner. Now Morris was brought face to face with actual work, and found in it the salvation of society. The creation of the beautiful, seeing it grow under one's fingers, is a saving experience. And more especially so when the thing produced is to pass away from private ownership, and become the possession of the community. Art become a handicraft has its smell of lamp oil blown off it, has its sympathies emboldened, its courage braced, its outlook widened, and almost inevitably the social character of the craftsman asserts itself as he begins to regard himself immersed in the stream of great human effort flowing from deep to deep. The wistful sadness of the dreamer of empty dreams goes; and if the vision of the craftsman is not piercing enough to reveal to him that wider sweep of space, time and event which the philosopher and religious teacher claims to see, it lifts a man from that rut in which he can but behold in life nothing but his own sadness, and in nature, even at her best, only a mournful beauty. That, Morris came to believe, was the mission of art, and it was true regarding his own history, for it brought him from the Greek, the Norse, and the mediæval, and opened his eyes upon his own age to sing of it,—its oppressions, its sighs, its hopes.

And so when we speak of an art revival in connection with the work of Morris, we must be very careful to say exactly what we mean. "Once again I warn you," he has said, "against supposing you may specially love art, that you will do any good by attempting to revivify art by dealing with its dead exterior. I say it is *the aims of art* that you must seek rather than *the art itself*." Morris's art revival was an art resurrection, and the breath of life which he sought to breathe into the dry bones of "the dead exterior" was that freedom of idea which comes from a freedom in the condition of the craftsman, and that calm, reigning beauty whose nature cannot be indicated with more exactness than that it is utility transfigured. The title of one of the many pamphlets

issued by him when in the height of his socialist activity—*Useful Work v. Useless Toil*—contains the essence of his conceptions of what an art revival ought to be, and also of his indictment against the present method of wealth production; the weariness in well-doing which the sordid surroundings of Red Lion Square brought over the firm, and the new energy which came to its business when it set up its looms and frames in an abbey built by the Normans and haunted with historical associations, indicate the inseparable intimacy there was between Morris's tastes and opinions. It was Morris's chief distinction that in everything pertaining to art he rudely brushed aside all forms and technique as being the dead externals, and sought to treasure human qualities as being the creative powers of whatever is worthy the name of art. Art cannot flourish whilst men decay, was the text from which he incessantly preached; take care of your men, your art will take care of itself, was the conclusion to which he arrived by many different roads. "For my part I believe that, if we try to realise the aims of art without much troubling ourselves what the aspect of the art itself shall be, we shall find we shall have what we want at last: whether it is to be called art or not, it will at least be *life*; and, after all, that is what we want."

## V

In the beginning of the eighties he joined a socialist organisation. In the familiar phrases and hopes of socialists, Morris found an ideal of life that satisfied both his instinct for realism and his thirst for beauty. In attaining to this end, Morris had to keep upon the path of the simple and the real. Tennyson's contented sweetness and Browning's bold, inconclusive verses were equally impossible for him, and being so limited in the source of his satisfaction, it was quite impossible for him ever to attain to an active faith unless in some way or other he could bring himself into sympathy

with a popular movement. His mediæval ideas of the conditions and spirit of work made him specially liable to be caught in the current of a labour movement, and the play to the poetic imagination allowed in an idea so wide, and in many ways so indefinite, as socialism, marked that out as the cause which was essentially his—the cause which was to be a fitting conclusion to his art and his literature.

Hence it is that there is no discrepancy, no absurdity, no oddity, no accidental connection between William Morris artist and William Morris socialist, between the “idle singer of an empty day” and the singer of “The Day is Coming.”

His socialism was coloured like his ballads and his tapestries. To him it was no conclusion from a process of economic reasoning conducted either by a Marx or a Jevons. He read up that socialism and expounded it with great clearness. The materialist ethics of the Marxians had special intellectual attractions for him, and his socialism on its economic side belonged to that school. Its familiar jargon is constantly found in his pages. But it was not the socialism which inspired him to begin with. He was moved into socialism first of all from what may be called the spiritual need of making life pleasant—“for death is sure to come, and I want to be happy, and even sometimes, say generally, to be merry”—and then from the need of establishing the conditions of art production—“slavery lies between us and art.” He has combined these two motives in a passage in *Signs of Change*. “But when revolution has made it ‘easy to live,’ when all are working harmoniously together, and there is no one to rob the worker of his time, that is to say, his life; in those coming days there will be no compulsion on us to go on producing things we do not want, no compulsion on us to labour for nothing; we shall be able calmly and thoughtfully to consider what we shall do with our wealth of labour-power. Now, for my part, I think the first use we ought to make of that wealth, of that freedom, should be to make all



our labour, even the commonest and most necessary, pleasant to everybody; for thinking over the matter carefully I can see that the one course which will certainly make life happy in the face of all accidents and troubles is to take a pleasurable interest in all the details of life."

And a little further on he pursues his thoughts thus: "(Popular Art) I repeat, no longer exists now, having been killed by commercialism. But from the beginning of man's contest with Nature till the rise of the present capitalistic system, it was alive, and generally flourished. While it lasted, everything that was made by man was adorned by man, just as everything made by Nature is adorned by her. . . . All this has now quite disappeared from the work of civilization. If you wish to have ornament you must pay specially for it, and the workman is compelled to produce ornament, as he is to produce other wares." Such considerations as these are the foundations upon which Morris's socialism was built. He had always more affection for Thorold Rogers's over-coloured picture of labour in mediæval England than for Marx's economic elaborations in *Das Kapital*; the development of the machine and man's subjection to it made him more furious than the clearest demonstration of the iniquity of "surplus value." That remarkable piece of beautiful diction, the speech of John Ball, in his "Dream of John Ball," is the socialism which attracted William Morris to the affairs of this earth. It was only in the last years of his life that he had any interest in Parliament, and it was languid at best. The *Commonweal*, with its poems and pictures in verse and prose, its criticisms, its mediævalisms, its anarchisms, was William Morris. The old-fashioned words scattered up and down its columns showed the source of the ideas—not only literary but intellectual—of its writer-in-chief. Morris meant "*News from Nowhere*" much more seriously than many people believe. In fact, we may regard his life as a completed round; for just as his later prose romances show



him back again, with the rich maturity of his intervening experience, to the style and spirit of his first contributions to literature as a story-teller when he was writing for the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, so his latest contribution to socialism shows him dreaming as he was when he wrote the *Earthly Paradise*—with perhaps this difference, that his dreams have become visions. When we have finished his description of what he calls the “Epoch of rest,” we feel that he has hearkened back upon his old aspirations, and that he has been singing, as the sirens in his *Jason* sang, “Come to the land where none grows old.” It does him no injustice to say that his twentieth century was the thirteenth born again. Morris simply dreamt of the reign of the craftsman, of the man whose soul would fashion cathedrals because he was free and consequently an artist, whose heart would find expression in song because he lived in the joy of human fellowship, and was in consequence always attune with music, whose mind would have no rest except in surroundings peaceful to eye and nerve because the vulgar eye of commercialism had closed for ever and its forced labour had become a thing of the past. And he had come to the conclusion that nothing like this could happen until the fruits of the earth were enjoyed by those whose labour nurtured them, until the freedom of co-operative work had taken the place of the drudgery of wage-slavery, until it could be said,

“Then a man shall work and bethink him, and rejoice in the  
deeds of his hand,  
Nor yet come home in the evening too faint and weary to  
stand,

For that which the worker winneth shall then be his indeed,  
Nor shall half be reaped for nothing by him that sowed no  
seed.

Then all mine and thine shall be ours, and no more shall any  
man crave  
For riches that serve for nothing but to fetter a friend for a  
slave.”

## VI

In his later years, Morris took less and less part in the active work of the platform and of the socialist propaganda, and devoted most of his energies to the Kelmscott Press and his prose romances. When the public heard, one day in early October two years ago, that he was dead, it perhaps hardly understood whom it had lost. His poetry was never what is called popular; his socialism won him the devotion of but a comparative handful; his art work did not glorify him in the estimation of the vulgar majority whom he despised. And yet his *Guenivere* and *Sigurd* secure for him an immortal place amongst the poets; his pamphlets and speeches will preserve his name amongst the roll of reformers. But as an influence that moulds society, it is his work in the name of art that will be his most unimpeachable title to fame. He is the great father of modern craftsmanship. He has taught this generation what it is good for it to surround itself with in order that it may know a harmonious peace. He has unlocked for us the secret of the production of things that are beautiful to the mind of man. He has bidden us consider the life, rather than the semblance, of art. And in doing so he has re-created our very being by teaching us new and better expressions of our inward sense of beauty, and by upholding worthy human qualities hitherto neglected or misunderstood. He has taught us to form estimates of society, not, as we had hitherto been accustomed, according as it yields opportunities to any kind of individual to attain to some measure of material success, but according as it secures to all rest and joy in life. His art had not only a theory of æsthetic, but a social philosophy and a personal morality in addition. It was he more than any other single man who drew us away (so far as we have been drawn away) from attempts to revive art through schools of design and the multiplication of human machines able to draw curves, copy the French, and

stereotype promising original developments, and who has taught us (so far as we have been taught) that from the life of man proceeds everything that is of art. He has made the decay and revival of art a problem in sociology. "Some readers," he wrote in justification of the introduction which he prefixed to Ruskin's *Nature of Gothic*—and the justification might serve as an introduction to his own work—"will perhaps wonder that in this important chapter of Ruskin I have found it necessary to consider the ethical and political, rather than what would ordinarily be thought the artistic side of it. I must answer that, delightful as is that portion of Ruskin's work which describes, analyses, and criticises art, old and new, yet this is not after all the most characteristic side of his writings. Indeed, from the time at which he wrote this chapter, here reprinted, those ethical and political considerations have never been absent from his criticism of art; and, in my opinion, it is just this part of his work, fairly begun in the *Nature of Gothic*, and brought to its culmination in that great book *Unto this Last*, which has had the most enduring and beneficent effect on his contemporaries, and will have, through them, on succeeding generations. It is much," he proceeds to say, that Ruskin should have restored artistic insight to the equipment of the art critic; "but it is far more that John Ruskin, the teacher of morals and politics, has done serious and solid work toward the new-birth of society, without which genuine art, the expression of man's pleasure in his handiwork, must inevitably cease altogether, and with it the hopes of the happiness of mankind." The ingathering of the harvest of such a work is, in the nature of things, far distant from the sowing of the seed. The thoughts which Morris spread broadcast with so much energy take long to ripen. And yet who can compare the artistic surroundings and spiritual tone of 1850 and 1889 and see no change for the better? Rouen, whose "mingled beauty, history, and romance took hold on me," is

lost to the world for ever; the "earlier loveliness" of Oxford has "gone down the wind": but the resurrection of art has begun in scores of places where, as lately as when Morris bemoaned the loss of those lovelinesses, art was but a dead formalism and a tasteless conventionality. "I look to see the bloom on the firstfruits of the social revolution," he said. Perhaps he saw, before that chill morning in October came. And yet he has written so truthfully: "Hard it is for the old world to see the new." At any rate, if the first blossoms of the revolution did not show themselves to him, he was able to attest to a blessing equally precious: "I have enjoyed my life—few more so—and death in any case is sure."





## Leo Tolstoy

### I

“**J**UDGE of a tree by its fruit.” Looking backward through history, along the line of the world’s great names, whom do we see to have been the world’s great benefactors? These: the men who have most deeply discerned, and most effectively conveyed to others, the truth of life. They are such as Lao-tze, Buddha, Zoroaster, Moses, Socrates, Jesus; from whom epochs are dated, and by whose teachings thousands of millions, age after age, suppose themselves to live. And, indeed, it is by such men and their teachings that mankind do live; for these “prophets” reveal the ideal towards which those who come after them must necessarily strive, though it be through all manner of ignorance and hypocrisy. The sign of a prophet is that he, of all men, deals with the simple and vital questions of life which are every man’s problem, and agitates, revolutionises, renews, society by his solutions. Only the ages that come after him can estimate the worth and power of a prophet, but even his own day can judge whether or not a man be a prophet. And all over the world, by the few who believe with him, by the many who reject him, by multitudes who cannot or will not understand him, it is felt and known that Leo Tolstoy, the Russian, is indeed a prophet, a revealer.

That spare, strong-looking old man with Socrates-like face and long grey hair and beard, who lives so quietly in Moscow or in the country near, it is not too much to say, is the greatest power in the world to-day.

"What," you ask, "the greatest power in the world?" And I answer, Yes. He is, for instance, the declared opponent of the wielders of the largest militarism in the world, and they do not dare to lay hands on him. His power is moral power, his rule is the rule of ideas; the enlightened consciences of men everywhere are with him. The mere circulation of his writings evidences that there is no man living who is so dominant over the thoughts of men to-day; even his enemies are influenced and moved by him.

The prophet deals with the simple and vital questions of life which are every man's problem. And all these questions are, and for men in society always have been, summed up in one—the Social Question; the question, *How shall we live in society?* Even the matter of "personal salvation" is involved in this prior question. Our Christian religion declares this when it shows that salvation for the individual depends upon his obedience to the principle, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." All history, with its rise and fall of nations and states, growth and decay of religions, strifes for power and against oppression, pageantry and misery, war, murder, devotion and sacrifice—all history may be best understood as the effort of humanity to rightly grasp in meaning and justly apply in practice, this great social principle, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

The obvious and all-embracing practical implications of that principle are well expressed in that great cry of the French Revolution for "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." To be in order, however, with the instinctive working and historic progress of the mind of man, let us change the positions of the words, and say, "Equality, Fraternity, Liberty." Then, looking upon the social struggle that is rending civilisation through its foundations, we may detect the general and ancient movement towards Equality, growing and spreading under its present-day name of Socialism. "*Equality of opportunity*" is the conscious demand of millions of people, revolted by experience of the ine-

quality which gives the power of property, with leisure and luxury, to the rich, and slavery, overwork, and want to the poor.

Within this wide range of Socialism is a less wide but deeper movement, which has for its hope Fraternity. Turning from the prevalent state of war—open war of the battle-field, veiled war of armed peace, and trade war called competition,—the conscience of man desires even more than equality of opportunity, namely, co-operation, brotherly treatment of man by man. Communism, the movement arising hence is called.

And yet again, within these others is a less wide, still deeper movement, for Liberty. Men ask, "What restrains us from Equality and Fraternity?" And the answer is given, "An evil principle, accepted as right in theory, and applied ruthlessly in social practice; the principle, namely, that it is right and necessary for some men to rule others by force, by law which rests on armed violence, military power." Those who give this answer are called Anarchists,<sup>1</sup> and their movement, Anarchy or Anarchism. The complete Anarchist is the perfect idealist; the man whose goal is entire freedom of action for all, knowing this to be the only possible condition in which equality and fraternity can exist. And this perfect freedom is seen to be compatible only with a perfect morality.

The true place and power of Tolstoy are not to be appreciated by those who are unaware of the vast area and true nature of all this social movement. Those who limit their thought and outlook to news-

<sup>1</sup> The word must be freed from misunderstanding. It stands for no other idea than its Greek meaning of "no government." It is *not* used by Anarchists to mean "no order." Anarchism looks to a better order of society which is to arise with freedom from force-government. That a few professed Anarchists advocate violent rebellion, bombs and assassination, is true; but that is no part of the idea which creates the movement. It only proves how bitter is the hatred of the existing social system.



papers and novels, Piccadilly and Parliament, the office and the suburban residence, the factory and the beershop, must necessarily remain unaware of what and where the heart and brain of the social body are prompting and leading. To them, Socialism is today's craze of the unavoidable percentage of fanatics in society, Communism is folly, Anarchism is crime, Tolstoy is a dim vague figure of genius, very noble (no doubt), but not to be taken seriously, a little mad; they do not, they cannot, know that they themselves are the dullards, the deadweights of humanity; that the Social Movement is of men, better and wiser than they, whose foremost prophet is Tolstoy, a prophet of the ages. This man, who acts and speaks so peaceably in the name of the Christ, has practised and taught the last doctrines of Socialism, Communism, Anarchism, and finds them summed up in the rediscovered Gospel.

## II

Our British "piety" has, on the whole, felt itself compelled to reverence the pure teaching and consistent life of Tolstoy. But the more it has spoken this reverence, the more it has rejected his doctrine. A first reason given for this rejection is that Tolstoy's teaching and example are a natural product of Russia, but do not apply in England. To at all benefit from Tolstoy, this illusion must be taken for what it is, and put aside. As far as any matter of Christian principle goes, the conditions of life are the same in Russia as in England. In both countries men need food, clothing and shelter, which need hand-and-head labour to produce. In both countries men buy and sell in the same way, hold property by similar laws; they put the same power of government in control of society, with emperor or queen at the head, with supporting legislative councils and parliaments, law-courts and judges, tax-gatherers and officials, police, army and navy. In both countries an ortho-

dox religion prevails, which approves the system of government, declares the existing state of things to be the will of God, and discountenances change.

It is hard to persuade the mass of people, to whom the foreigner remains so very foreign, of the identity of life, in all but some superficial aspects, in all civilized countries. The slight dissimilarities between English and Russian habits must be understood and seen in their proper proportions to the whole of life, and Tolstoy will then be read in England as a man appealing equally to all men. And we must come to see that the ballot, absence of a literary censorship, freedom of speech, and voluntarism in the army, have not created different issues of life for Englishmen and Russians.

A difference that has importance, lies in the fact that while in Russia over eighty per cent. of the people are peasant-agriculturists, and the rest are city-dwellers and the rich, in England eighty per cent. are of the town, and the rest are of the country. On their great plains, amid their forests, the Russians are nearer nature than we, and therefore simpler in habit and thought. The opposition of the two classes, rich and poor, oppressors and oppressed, is more readily seen in such a society than in ours, where the middle classes break the contrast. This character of the national life about him has undoubtedly given a certain shape and quality to Tolstoy's work; it has also helped him to that searching simplicity and directness which is more difficult to attain in the greater complication and confusion of our western life.

The Tolstoy family is of high aristocracy, dating from Peter the Great's time. On his mother's side, Leo Tolstoy has for ancestor a Prince of Montenegro, whom he is said to greatly resemble in feature. The principal estate of the family is at Yasnaya Polyana, eighty miles or thereabout south from Moscow, and near Tula. There Leo Tolstoy (who, as every one knows, is hereditarily a Count) was born, now sixty-nine years ago, on 28th August, 1828. To understand

his childhood one must read *Boyhood* (otherwise known in English as *Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth*), written by him in his early twenties; not actually, but essentially, this book is autobiography, as is so much in his other stories and novels. Let us at once remark that Tolstoy's method and power consist in entire devotion to truth in life and nature; this devotion, born in him as a master-impulse, having been consciously adopted and followed from reading Rousseau in his youth. It results that, of all writers, Tolstoy is the most consistently self-revealing; and one will in vain seek through literature for such another record of the gradual, inevitable, convincing, illuminating, unfoldment of a soul, as the record he has given us. He is Rousseau with a difference; difference of the age, and of his own superior spirituality. The age has led him to apply to human life the accurate method applied by science to physical nature; his spirituality has enabled him to enter the sphere and proclaim the realities of the spirit.

His early years, spent out on those great plains, among rich relations, servants and peasants, exercised the deep love of nature which informs all his writing. Picture the "great estate" with its varied life of peasant and aristocrat; the expanses of sky, plain and forest; the mansion, and the wooden huts of the village; the idle pleasures of "the family," and the toil of the peasants. All these made the first deep impressions in the child's mind, and gave material for the work of the man. One need not enlarge upon this; it suffices to say that, amid these surroundings, he was a child, full of life and animation, deeply observant, in many ways extraordinarily, even awkwardly, sensitive, with a great power and habit of introspection—the especially Russian faculty of "self-picking." It is said that in these early years his disposition towards goodness, rightness of life, was shown in such ways as the keeping of a diary to note his faults and guide him in their correction.

In his teens he saw something of life in Moscow,



that city, half a capital; and was entered at the Kazan University. There he learned—what he chose, and no more; consequently, from a professorial point of view, his career was not distinguished. However, he unquestionably took thence much of his own choosing; for instance, "At eighteen I became a free-thinker," he says. The easy, indifferent, and in the fullest sense immoral, life of his class, and the evident absence of reality in the profession and teaching of religion around him, thus early produced their effect, inevitable with a sincere and well-disposed mind. At about twenty he entered the army, and while with his brother serving against the tribes of the Caucasus, he wrote the pieces which compose *Boyhood*. At twenty-six he was in the Crimea serving against the allies. His great talent and liveliness wrought upon all about him; his sayings "went the round," and a song of his was sung by the whole army. But his real employment then was to gather from experience data for his last, ripe teaching upon the world-crime of war. Not yet seeing clearly, still his book of the period, *Sevastopol*, is so simple, so thrilling, so obviously matter-of-fact, that it is in itself sufficient to turn one from war for ever. The Tsar, hearing something of what Tolstoy was doing, had the promising author taken from danger and put to serve in a place of safety.

And now let me direct attention to a second "criticism" of Tolstoy, put up as a defence against the power of his doctrine. The first criticism, which sets up an assumed essential difference between life in England and in Russia, may be termed feeble; this second criticism can only be termed base. It is, that Tolstoy is a reformed libertine, one who in his age repents the crimes of his youth and manhood in order to gain heaven. "The excesses of his youth have produced old-age asceticism in him," is said in so many words. (And the people who so speak are nearly always ready to call Tolstoy "saint" and "prophet," while they say, "We need not follow his exaggera-



tions"; they forget, or will not see, that those so-called "exaggerations" make him precisely what he is, and distinguish him from them, who do not wish or who fear to be "saints" and "prophets.") That a man's past affects his present is a truism. But is John Bunyan less true in his Puritan Evangel, because of his bitterly-repentant evil youth? Is Francis of Assisi less holy in life because of his bitterly-repentant first manhood? Is Paul less a Christian because he first murdered Christians? And, in any case, it is not to his own personal worth that Tolstoy calls our attention; but to solid reasons, actual experiences, verifiable truths, which, once discovered, are, and must be, the same for all human perception, whatever the individual's past may be.

This accusation against Tolstoy is the echo of his own declaration in *My Confession*, a book which, truly read, yields the key to his life. His words are:—

"I put men to death in war, I fought duels to slay others, I lost at cards, wasted my substance wrung from the sweat of peasants, punished the latter cruelly, rioted with loose women, and deceived men. Lying, robbery, adultery of all kinds, drunkenness, violence, and murder, all committed by me, not one crime omitted, and——"

His accusers omit what follows—

"Yet I was not the less considered by my equals a comparatively moral man. Such was my life during ten years."

He speaks of his early manhood. We are apt to forget that he accuses himself of living as the great majority of our own English army officers and fashionable men are accustomed to live—indeed, he says, he lived not quite so badly as his class. Tolstoy tells us of his early desire for virtue, his struggles for virtue, the laughter and opposition he met, the applause he found for his evil deeds; "not one word was spoken, not a finger lifted, to help." All his books are the faithful record of that struggle, thus early begun, and of his errors and his attainment. It is not

well to speak of him as has been done. Those who know him as he is can gauge the shallowness of the accusers.<sup>1</sup>

## III

Living between Moscow and St. Petersburg, moving in fashionable, literary, and generally "cultured" (as it is called) society, and travelling abroad occasionally, Tolstoy's fame as a writer grew. Though he more and more felt himself to be without any certain guidance in life, still his writings ("studies by the way," these earlier pieces may be called) show more and more of large purpose, seriousness, and moral direction. *Albert, Lucerne, The Two Hussars, A Russian Proprietor*, exhibit this growth.

At last he married the daughter of a German physician in Moscow. The courtship is told as that of Kitty and Levine in "*Anna Karenina*;" the history of Levine in that story being Tolstoy's own history up to this period of his life. Now thirty-four years old, he settled at Yasnaya Polyana, and the course of his life for fifteen years may be briefly described. He managed his estates and increased their value and income; sought to improve the condition of the peasants; experimented with schools for his peasants and their children; wrote largely of these labours and the novel ideas and principles he discovered and applied; became known as "a practical philanthropist," his writings upon the children's schools, which he practically yielded to the children to conduct in their own way, being found especially interesting and useful; gave himself heartily to the large family of sons and daughters which grew up to him. And all this while

<sup>1</sup> The Editor of this volume will perhaps permit me to refer those who desire some more personal account of the Tolstoy of the present, to a pamphlet entitled *A Pilgrimage to Tolstoy*, containing six letters written to the *The New Age* nearly two years ago. The publishers are the Brotherhood Publishing Co.

he laboured in succession upon the great novels, *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*.

Tolstoy now desires no one to read those books, though they contain the germs of all he has since developed. The material for his argument upon life is gathered there, but the all-important conclusions are wanting. If I now dwell upon these works it is only briefly to affirm the qualities of the writer discovered in them; qualities attested by the criticism, not of one circle or one country, but of all circles and countries. The note of all criticism of Tolstoy is that "his novels are *life itself*." In other writers one may find colour and distortion of the medium; in Tolstoy, the reader powerfully feels the absence of these. "Life itself" moves before him. We are given the life Tolstoy has felt and seen, the people he has known, the motives he has discerned. The pre-eminent qualities of his work are three; these we may well consider in some detail, and as to them critics generally are agreed.

Let us first put sincerity: There is in Tolstoy's writing, from first to last, one clear purpose of truth-telling. No improbable romance, no artificial situations; only ordinary people, ordinary affairs, ordinary feelings,—but all made strong, absorbing as "life itself," by this depth of truth. He is a discoverer of reality.

Let us put next, breadth. The theatre of these novels is nothing smaller than all modern society. They are Russian, and yet cosmopolitan. The author has "seen all." We feel that, as they must in life, so all classes of men and women, from emperors to beggars, priests and profligates, the learned and the unlearned, idlers, tradesmen, artists, peasants, rich and poor, move here. And we feel that all this life is, in an especial way, subject to him who describes it. This author sees the life of man as one, and exposes its unity under all bewildering varieties of outward appearance.

And thirdly, let us say insight. Tolstoy is the



furthest from those story-tellers whose automata are only interesting because of the adventures that whirl about and alternately humiliate and glorify their bodies; he has no part with those who give us superior persons, heroines and heroes; his faculty is for divining the deep motives of our own hearts; his people are interesting because we know ourselves in them. Not in the motives we give out to the world, not even in the motives we proclaim to ourselves, but in the real motives, the great currents of desire that sweep us on—in these Tolstoy deals. He shows us our basic selves.

I find no point where any of his contemporaries, his opponents, can justly place a finger and say, "This man fails in this or that qualification to be a judge of life." He has, in regard to his later work, been accused of want of exact scholarship and technical philosophical training, "which," say his critics, "are only obtainable, each of them, by a life's study; and even a man of genius who becomes a novelist, must forego these other acquisitions, and remain content to leave untouched the work of scholars and philosophers." In this way "the learned" repudiate his conclusions (really without understanding them), not feeling that they have in Tolstoy a man who is their master, and who well knows what to take of their, the scholars' and schoolmen's, results, for the use of his own larger purpose. Before men of genius all life is subserviently departmentised, and the kings of mind draw from their offices of state, from each department, such truth as their kingdom needs.

Readers and critics in all civilisation have established Tolstoy the novelist in the front rank of his order. Now, it is said among these same readers and critics, that Tolstoy the teacher, the "religionist," has sunk into a fanaticism; is, indeed, a little mad. In proceeding to consider his later developments, we may well keep in mind always the question, "Have we in these teachings and this life the inevitable outcome, the ripe fruit, of great sanity, or



the disease and folly of genius? For assuredly, in the case of Tolstoy, it is one or the other.

## IV

Inevitably, any exposition of Tolstoy's teaching must follow the course of his life, because of that sincere and consistent development of his mind in his writings already remarked upon. And also, because he always presents his conclusions as drawn from actual experience, from living practice; no mere theory, speculation, word-weaving.

In *My Confession* Tolstoy has told of the great change which came over his life as he drew near fifty years of age. He then found himself rich, famous, prosperous in his family, able to choose what friends he would, and in complete health. Amid all this, there grew upon him a new, strange unrest. It was as though he had found out that his life was without meaning. Continually he asked himself, "Why?" and "What after?" It was no light sentiment, but a life-and-death agony of soul upon which he was entered. He feared to live under this sense of the incomprehensibility, the purposelessness, of life. All his former conceptions of life he now saw to be insufficient, empty, for they did not even suggest what is the end of it all, for himself, for all men. His agony became such that he put ropes and guns out of his way, lest he should at some moment be driven to suicide. He wondered how in the past he could have lived without solving the problem. Surely he must, he considered, in all his reading of ancients and moderns, philosophers and religious teachers, in all his intercourse with his cultured friends, have missed that explanation of life which they surely must have known! Again he read, again he discussed. But he only saw the more clearly that philosophy and culture had no practical and satisfying answer to the problem; they only confessed its existence, and despaired of it. "From Solomon to Schopenhauer,"

they showed life as a thing incomprehensible; on the whole an evil thing; to be endured while one must, and to be met with the effort to get from it as much happiness as possible while it is ours. He found the last state of philosophy and culture to be Pessimism. There was no "faith," no confidence in life to be gained, sufficient to carry one on through life.

At last he reflected that the philosophers and men of culture—people of that circle to which he himself belonged, who assumed (as he himself had done) that all possibility of understanding life lay with their own superior intelligence and learning—were, after all, a very small fraction of humanity. Outside them lay the vast mass of mankind, the labouring folk, "the common people." With a renewed interest in those whom he had loved and studied all his life, Tolstoy again examined the life of the mass, the Russian people. And here, despite labours and miseries, despite ignorance, error and sin, here he found *a faith in life*. The peasants are free from the pessimism which rules the cultured; they display a satisfaction in following their seemingly intolerable toils, and they meet death with an ease and confidence, which are not felt by the rich, the comfortable, the cultured. *They find something to live for; a current of life that carries them along.* Not as an excuse for keeping the labouring poor in labour and poverty, but as a fact of experience, Tolstoy, the deep observer, announces this.

He perceived that there was in this "faith" something of a religious character; something related to his own boyish recollections of the Gospel, and to his life-long secret instinct that there is in the Gospel a superior truth. He perceived that the basis of this "faith" was acceptance of "God,"—that concept of a Power Who overrules all, which belongs to all religions. Again he associated himself with Orthodoxy, sharing the worship, the sacraments, the observances of the church, with the common people.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In Russia there is a certain compulsion upon the peasants to "attend Church."

And he envied the unlearned peasants their ability to receive without question the forms and ceremonies with which the Gospel is bound up for them. For himself, he was compelled to discriminate. The injunction, "love one another in unity" he could receive with joy, reason assenting; but the transubstantiation, the Trinity, and so forth, his reason, as formerly, could not rest in. He made his discrimination. The "living faith" in a God, the Father of all, and the duty of loving and serving all men, our brothers, as ourselves, he detached from the mass of Church accretions, finding this to be the pure, essential Christian doctrine. The Churches—Greek, Romish, Protestant, Dissenting—oppose each other; that is not unity. They countenance war of Christians against Christians; that is not love. He could not be of the Church. And he perceived that all the good he had seen in the life of men, while associated with the simple faith of the Gospel, is yet outside, indeed opposed by, the Churches.<sup>1</sup>

For "the faith" which lives in the people is that confidence in life which enables them day by day to toil on at the labours by the fruit of which all men live. It is *they*, the labouring people, who are the servants of all, duly fulfilling (and under the exactions of the non-producing rich trebly fulfilling) the law, which says for all men, "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread." In this direction, Leo Tolstoy found the light.

## V

Tolstoy is his own best biographer, and we shall best follow him onward from this point by reading *What Shall We Do Then?*—a book written to answer the question of men and women in positions like Tolstoy's

<sup>1</sup> It is to be emphasised that Tolstoy's attitude towards the Russian Church is equally (and necessarily) his attitude towards all so-called "Christian" Churches, these being at one with the existing social system.



own ; the question of people who come to see the truth discovered in *My Confession*. This work is virtually in three parts, dealing respectively with Charity, Property, and Labour.

It appears that as the light dawned, Tolstoy, feeling himself compelled to walk by it, set himself to discover how he, a non-producing rich man, might enter into right relations with those labouring poor upon whom he had so far been a parasite. In Moscow he applied himself to what we in England have learned to call "slumming ;" visiting and assisting in all ways the extremely poor, founding a relief society for collecting information and alms, and for distributing the alms. So he attempted to justify himself. He was not satisfied, and came to see the error he was still in by the aid of one Sutaieff, a peasant-preacher who, from being a village merchant, had given himself to a very simple and honest following of the Gospel. In this man's presence, Tolstoy, to gain his opinion, described his own "works of charity." Sutaieff would not approve, and when pressed for his own remedy, told Tolstoy to take into his house two destitute men—he himself would take one—and with these they should live as brothers, eating, working and speaking together. Tolstoy says he at once saw the truth—that same truth expressed thus by John Ruskin :—

"The mistake of the best men, through generation after generation, has been that great one of thinking to help the poor by almsgiving, and by preaching of patience or of hope, and by every other means, emollient or consolatory, except the one thing which God orders for them, justice."

This "justice," Ruskin goes on to say, is :—

"By the best men denied in its trial time, by the mass of men hated whenever it appears."

And Leo Tolstoy was now to become the preacher of this denied and hated justice.

The failure of "charity" led on to a deeper examination of the relations between rich and poor ; to



new study of economics, history, philosophy and life. The result, as shown in the chapters discussing Property, the money-power, is precisely that economic presentment made by Socialists everywhere, but here given in Tolstoy's own way. The rich are in possession of property and the power of government. By exaction of rent, interest, profit and taxes, they take from the labourer all but that "subsistence-wage" which orthodox economists assert to be his miserable final portion. Sometimes even that is taken. The whole process Tolstoy well describes; but a singular value of these chapters is the searching examination of the nature and operation of Money,—too long to be adequately dealt with here. Money is shown to be the chain of the labourer's slavery; he must have it, to pay rent and taxes, and to buy what he cannot himself produce. To get it, he must sell his labour or his produce, and by the operation of monopoly and competition his labour and produce are made cheap, and the things he must buy are made dear. For any surplus left him, government takes that away, to spend in official salaries and militarism.

Graphic pictures of these things in the doing Tolstoy gives to us. He shows us the rich family in their summer country residence, settled to a life of pianos and picnics, made possible by an array of well-fed, leisurely domestics. Opposite the house are the sloping fields, dotted with black figures of men and women, old people and little children, who come out to work with the morning sun, and cease with the sunset. All day long, having only black bread to eat and *kvass* to drink, they sweat and toil, getting in the hay. And see, the hay of last year is being trodden into the earth of the road under the feet of the horses at the door of the great house! So it is, says Tolstoy to the rich, that the starved and slavish toil of these poor is wasted upon your idle luxury. "Yes," he says, "you have made the poor into a beast to carry you on its back. And the beast carries you, very easily for yourselves, and when it suffers and groans

you say, 'Ah, poor creature, how much we pity you! We would do anything to help you!' And you would," says Tolstoy, "anything—except get off its back." That, according to him, is just the duty to themselves, not less than to the labouring poor, which the rich need to perform.

Again, he describes the life of a rich man of his acquaintance, an "enlightened Liberal," quite "able-bodied." This man rises late, eats elaborately, smokes cigarettes, talks "enlightened Liberalism," takes the play or the opera, sups, talks, smokes, sleeps. To provide his cigarettes, young girls in the factories are preparing early death for themselves; to provide his often-changed white linen, an old woman in the side street bends over the ironing-board from morning until night. Let my friend, says Tolstoy, give up what does him harm and kills young girls; let him iron his own shirts while the old woman rests,—if he finds the shirts worth doing when done by himself.

How is it that the idle rich justify themselves in thus living on the labour of the poor? By a huge deceit, says Tolstoy, concocted by a false political economy, based upon a perverted philosophy, sanctioned by a venal Church, and enforced by the State's power to kill. That deceit is the current doctrine of the Division of Labour. True, says Tolstoy, it is good that some should plough and others grind; some make bricks, and others build; some make cloth and others coats; and that these workers should exchange what they make. But it is quite another thing to say also, that some should be emperors, kings, presidents, statesmen, property-owners, priests and preachers, organisers of industry, writers and artists, men of science, soldiers and doctors, and so forth. If all the kings, statesmen, priests, preachers, organizers of industry, writers, artists, men of science, soldiers, doctors, were swept out of existence to-morrow, we perfectly well know that the ploughing, grinding, brick-making, building, weaving, tailoring, would go on just as before—only with this enormous advantage,

*that the labourers would be relieved of the burden of supporting in their present colossal luxury all those lives of non-producers.* But take away the ploughman, miller, brickmaker, builder, weaver, tailor—and king, statesman, priest, preacher, organizer of industry, writer, artist, man of science, soldier, doctor, are left to starve, houseless, unclothed—"shown up" in all their cultivated inability to do anything really needful.

"What!" the "cultured" world has exclaimed at Tolstoy, "do you mean to say that *we* are not useful to humanity—we, the intelligent, the orderers of things?"

Precisely that, answers Tolstoy. And he bids these people to take themselves at the valuation put on them by the mass of men, the workers; not at their own deceitful valuation. The whole of their "cultured" society might go, for all the working-people care. If brute-force or want of employment did not compel, would any labouring men give their lives as soldiers and police to preserve the precious "State" we live under? Not a man, it is to be believed. And if there were no soldiers and police to compel, would the people pay taxes? The question is ridiculous; the peasant, the labouring-man everywhere, would only say "Thank God," if he ceased to be drained by the frightful imposts which go in war, officialism and civil-lists of kings. And the simplest forms of village labour would be much more productive to the labourer, than work for competitive wages under "organizers of industry" who "organize" so as to sweep the largest part of what other men produce into their own houses and coffers. The workers know that "employers" *come between* the worker and his work; hence trade-unions and strikes. And priests and preachers? The mass of the workers show their appreciation by not going to church, except under some kind of compulsion, as in Russia. And writers and artists? The mass of the people do not read books or look at pictures; they have no opportunity as a rule; but where libraries or galleries give a scant opportunity, not "the



people," but "the cultured" and one workman here and there, use them. And doctors? How much have all the schools of medicine done to alleviate the sufferings of the poor? Live in a village or a "slum," and take note. In effect, nothing.

This pretence of usefulness made by the classes has its "reasons." Once the excuse was, and in great part still is, the "religious" one, namely, that things as they are, are the will of God, and we must not rebel, but endure. This is interpreted to mean that the masses must bear their privation, and the rich may enjoy their idle luxury, for this is just as God intends. But now the latest excuses are philosophic and scientific. Hegelianism, for instance, arrives at the "immanence of God in nature," and easily finds Him in the State-oppression, the Church-hypocrisy, and the Property-robbery—all which we must therefore take in the necessary order of things. Comte and Spencer are also shown by Tolstoy to take the same view in effect; and modern science and philosophy are shown as teaching us to name "evolution" instead of "the Will of God," and to remain content with living a nice moral life, without criticising or rejecting the unreasonable, maleficent order of society in which our lives are moulded.

"What shall we do then?" says Tolstoy. Learn to understand the law of Labour. Begin by living simply, healthily; making small demands on others' labour for house, food, clothing. Follow Socrates; follow Jesus. Proceed by learning to do something useful and doing it; some genuine "bread-labour," to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, do good to the sick and oppressed. Follow Paul's Christlike injunction to early and real Christians, that they should "follow honest trades for necessary wants, lest they become unfruitful." And for women, let them take their sisterly part in useful work, ceasing to look upon the sex-relation as a means of getting a living, in or out of marriage. If married, let them cease from luxury and vanity, and take their burden of motherhood as a



duty to be fulfilled as to God, and not to be avoided by artifice for the sake of pleasure.

"Cease to do evil, learn to do well." This is the message of the book we have considered.

## VI

Isaiah and the priests, Socrates and the demagogues, Jesus and the Pharisees, Francis and the cardinals, Tolstoy and the clerics,—always it is the same story. The "public guardians of religion" are the stout enemies of the prophet; and the Holy Office, "*to do God service*," hands over the "heretic" to the fires lit by the Secular Arm. In *My Religion*, another of those books which may, in their unity, be called his autobiography, Tolstoy has announced what should compel every priest, clergyman, and minister who understands, either to abandon his calling, or to proclaim Tolstoy a dangerous heretic. This announcement is nothing less than a, to our day, new understanding of Christianity; which indeed makes our orthodox Christianity look like nothing so much as Antichrist.

In *My Religion* we have the account of how Tolstoy recovered the meaning of the Gospel, hidden from him by centuries of ecclesiastical commentary and perversion. At the stage of development described in *My Confession*, a new light shone upon one after another of the Gospel sayings and teachings. Tolstoy discovered that Jesus had *meant what He said*, and had in many instances meant the opposite of what His words have been twisted and obscured into. Entering upon his researches in a spirit of freest criticism, substantially acquainted with all that scholarship has done upon the Gospels, and prepared to accept only what he could plainly understand, he came to see that if the plain, full meaning of the words of the Gospel be taken, a doctrine of life appears in them, at once simple, non-supernatural, complete, and joyful to every soul in whom dwells the love of goodness.

But a doctrine, how revolutionary to the world's prevalent conception and practice of life !

It must not be thought that Tolstoy is by any means alone in his understanding of the doctrine of Jesus. A host of men in our own day see as he sees ; his singularity is only superior clearness, reasonableness, courage, completeness. In comparing him with John Ruskin and Matthew Arnold, for instance, one cannot fail to realize this superiority in Tolstoy over men who have so much of his spirit and outlook. Analysing the ground of the repudiations of him, one sees that they are made simply because of this logic and completeness, by men who have neither, and who are afraid of the simple drastic truth.

The discovery, the prophecy of Tolstoy is, then, that men who would follow the truth revealed by Jesus, must wholly accept and live by the basic principles of Jesus ; which are : that there is a God, Who is our Father, giving us life because He loves us ; Whose will is that men should love and care for their fellow-men equally with themselves. Believe and do this, and you are a Christian, says Tolstoy ; reject this, or equivocate upon it, and you are no Christian. He is logical. If we trust God, we must trust Him wholly, and do nothing that is contrary to His love and truth ; but obey conscience utterly, despite all outward difficulties. If we love our neighbour, we shall show it by treating him, whoever he may be, just as we should wish to be treated ourselves. Yes, Tolstoy is logical. He shows how, if men really had faith in God the Father, they would not try to secure their lives by taking part in the present competitive and warlike organization of society, "the kingdom of this world" ; but they would "come out of Babylon," live rightly, usefully, and trust God. He shows how, if men really loved their neighbours as themselves, no man could keep his wealth and rest in ease and comfort while another man suffered ; there could be no kingship, power, privilege, riches, poverty, among men who loved each other. Love would make a last end of these evils.

To all this "idealism" men accede readily enough. The pressure of Tolstoy's doctrine, however, comes just where it came with Jesus; namely, in the saying, "*If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them.*" Men answer, "We cannot live by these principles; that were suicide." Jesus says, "You must; if you would follow me, you must indeed die to the bodily life, must yield yourselves as already dead." It is the Christian *necrosis*, once more honestly and clearly put to men in our own day, as it was eighteen centuries since, and as it has been many times between. By many methods Tolstoy goes about to prove the point of Jesus. Perhaps his most effective work is the enunciation, in *My Religion*, of those "five points of conduct" enjoined in the Sermon on the Mount, which in themselves involve the whole Christian spirit and life, and are in themselves wholly revolutionary to the existing order of society. They are contained in Matt. v. 21—48,<sup>1</sup> and are understood and remarked upon by Tolstoy in this spirit:—

The whole bearing of the teaching is to show men the error of attempting to bring about good order in society by force, by other means than goodwill, reason, truth. So Jesus, point by point, contrasts the present method of laws, enforced by punishments, with His own, the ideal method. His followers are not to follow the old fallacy of law, and use compulsion, but to live rightly themselves, from the inward spirit. For instance, where the law says, Thou shalt not kill, for fear of judgment and punishment, Jesus says, Thou shalt not feel anger, which is the root of murder. Where the law sanctions marriage and allows divorce, Jesus says that he whose lust makes him unfaithful even in desire only, is an adulterer, and when divorce leads to remarriage, it causes adultery. Where the law professes to defend person and property, and regulate the affairs of individuals in society, Jesus says we must cease from all such means of defence and regulation,

\* The English Revised Version should be consulted by the reader.



and give the other cheek to the smiter, yield our garment to him who sues at law for our coat, go two miles where required to go one, and give and lend freely to those who ask. Where the law says we must, as a sacred duty, fulfil our oaths, pledges, contracts, Jesus says we must enter into no such obligations, but deal in plain Yes and No, as honest men. Where the law permits, nay encourages us, to defend ourselves against enemies—criminals, social outcasts, foreigners,—Jesus says, No, you must love them, do them good, as you would do to your friends; just as the Father sends rain and sunshine on good and bad alike.

To understand this teaching as being literally, simply, fully meant by Jesus, is indeed a shock to all orthodoxy. For, says Tolstoy, look what we have done! We have wholly explained away the force of this teaching, and ignorantly call ourselves "Christian," while doing and approving in Christ's very name, the very opposite to what He commands! Not feel anger? We actually commit murder, the ripe fruit of anger, in wholesale fashion, and then imagine that we and the hangmen and soldiers we employ may all together "go to heaven" as "good Christians." Not encourage lust between the sexes? Church and Law alike consecrate and sanction *adulteries* which cannot be true marriages, for in most cases it is not the man's first union; divorce is established; marriage is a market for daughters, and looked upon (as is prostitution also) as a way of getting a living for women. Abolish all oaths, pledges, contracts? Tsar, queen, lords, legislators, bishops, clergy, ministers, judges, witnesses, police, soldiers,—all take oath on coming to office, and take it on the very book which says, "Swear not at all"! Thus we put duty to, we know not what—king, country, government—in place of duty to our own knowledge of what is good, right and true. And doing that, we proceed to make it our duty to—*love* our enemies? Not in the least; but to gather armies and fleets to *murder* them,



when "our country" calls! And so "fellow-Christians" go to war, and "ministers of God in the name of Christ" and chaplains of regiments and warships in each country, pray that the "Christians" of their own nation may be successful in murdering other children of the same Father!

At least, Tolstoy would say to our pretended Christians, at least have the decency to own that you are what you are—heathens, and not Christians. You *may* think your methods and your reasons for acting as you do, to be very good ones, but remember, Jesus Christ's methods and reasons are just the reverse of yours.

"Blessed are ye poor," Tolstoy understands to be a necessary part of Christ's teaching to His disciples. "You, who from your principles cannot hold property, can assert no rights of your own,—with you," says Jesus, "all is eternally well." From the full meaning, the practical sense, of this, Tolstoy turns not one whit. And he knows that to-day many people feel that the voice of God, *the necessity of their own spirit*, calls them to this Christian poverty. He knows of the agony of soul endured by men in power, men under responsibility, men of wealth, and poor labourers who know their work to be useless, base or destructive: agony caused by the knowledge that they are violating the life of their spirit, their true life. Many such have turned to him, saying, "What are we to do? There seems no way of escape." He, in effect, answers simply, "Acknowledge the truth. Do not deceive or excuse yourself. Confess to the world what your conscience and reason tell you. Lose no opportunity to cease to do evil, and learn to do well. Then He Who is Love and Truth will lead you into rightness of life."

## VII

And what has been Tolstoy's practical conduct, in response to these principles? Those who are in a position to know can speak of the faithfulness with which he has, at each step taken by his spirit,

followed with his body. So soon as he saw the truth and the full implication of Christ's doctrine, he abandoned his property; which his family, not by his desire, but by their own insistence, took over. For this he was called mad by his own family and circle, and that thought spread in the world that held him famous. On the other hand, it has been said that he took care to provide for his family, and has thus only nominally "given up all." People say, "He still lives in luxury with his family, and all this proves, in his own person, that his doctrine is impossible."

The fact is, that he has simply followed the principles he professes. He felt no obligation to force the property from his family, just as he felt no obligation to force his neighbour's property from his neighbour. It was sufficient that he himself surrendered all property. He felt no obligation to live apart from his family, but rather to endure conditions he had come to abhor, in order that he might live the Christian life in presence of those whom he had drawn to himself. There never has been any fear (and there could not be with such a man), of his wanting friends to support him and his family, in case of need, so that there was no temptation of fear to lead him to cling to his former position. For this reason, some say, "Ah, it was easy for Tolstoy to make the sacrifice. But *I* cannot." Such people forget that the Christian life is the *necrosis*, the dying to live again, for all who enter it. Tolstoy faced death in facing the Russian Church and State. *There* was, and is, his trial.

When he surrendered his ownership of property, he simplified his already simple life, and step by step became an abstainer from alcohol, a non-smoker, a vegetarian, and his own servant. To repay mankind for what he still took of the produce of other men's labour, he ploughed the fields, did other agricultural labour, and made boots. It is a small item in the opposition to him from the powers-that-be, that, when he put up over his wooden hut the legend "House of Leo Nicolaevitch Tolstoy, Shoemaker," and began

business, the authorities ordered the sign down, as being unsuitable for a nobleman, a count, and tending to bring aristocracy and the State generally into disrepute.

He refuses all money-traffic ; perceiving, with Shelley, that money is "the mediative sign of selfishness," impossible in that "commerce of good words and works" which is the ideal state of human relations. Since the change in his conception of life, he has neither desired nor received payment for his writings. "But," say some, "it is necessary to live, and we must take payment for work done." Tolstoy answers, "I know of no necessity for me to live, but I do know of a necessity for me to utter the truth I perceive, and to give it freely to all men. Its value I do not know, and I am content to do useful (and healthy) work with my hands for my living, and in return, take what men freely give me." "Ah, but," people say again, "that is easy for a man of genius, but *we* cannot do that." I would again refer to the Russian Government, as a standing threat against the life of any such reformer as Tolstoy. He braved that threat, made his sacrifice, as all must do.

When Leo Tolstoy began to write in this new spirit, State and Church, confronted with militant Nihilism, thought the revived Gospel of Peace would be a help to them. For some time the authorities rather encouraged the spread of Tolstoy's new books. But presently, they began to see and feel the real effect of the new spirit. Then the censorship began its work ; and now, but little of Tolstoy's writing is allowed to be circulated in Russia. Persecution has fallen, not directly on Tolstoy himself, but on his friends. Ordinary persons found reading the prohibited works are arrested and sent to prison, even to Siberia. His special friends and co-workers are removed or exiled ; two are in England now, another is coming. The purpose of the authorities is, to isolate him, and make him thus less powerful. They will not touch himself : deeming that to suffer for the truth is



precisely the fate Tolstoy might, for truth's sake, most desire. Indeed, just lately he wrote to the Ministry of the Interior, asking why, if they punished those who read his books, they did not deal with himself, their source.

Of his views upon government, there could, from the first, be little mistake. Five years ago, *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, removed any possibility of mistake. There, Tolstoy explained the doctrine of Christ as a new conception of life, which makes *love* the spring of all human action, and *truth* the only method of action. From this standpoint he showed how the States, in all their laws and institutions, and the established and propertied Churches with them, rest on a foundation of *organised physical force*, a basis which is precisely anti-Christian.

The proof of this position as to the Gospel teaching, Tolstoy has worked out at great length in *The Four Gospels Harmonised and Translated*, of which two out of the three volumes exist in English translation. Dealing with the Greek text, and making a new translation of his own, he has here been accused of insufficient scholarship, violence to the Greek, and other deficiencies, the sum of which is only trifling, and makes not at all substantially against his understanding of the Gospel. Notwithstanding all he has written and done, all these years, in all civilization *there has not yet appeared a serious opposing critic of Tolstoy*. Why is this? Cannot our European Churches and Universities provide us a man who will truly state and truly refute the teaching which is turning from them the minds of the most spiritual and most intelligent men everywhere? Why are we given only the feeble "magazinings" of such men as Canon Farrar or a casual secularist? It is, one must believe, that each profounder mind feels that there is no effective refutation.

I have said little or nothing of such work of Tolstoy's earlier period as his treatment of the physiology of war, in *War and Peace*, or the essay *Power*



and *Liberty*, or the later and highly important philosophical work, *Life*. It must suffice to say, that while his work is always philosophical in the sense of being true to fact and reason, he has written in several quite different styles, terms and methods, obviously aiming to state his position by every possible means, "if by any means he might win some." It is not wise to suppose that any known "school of thought," or tradition, or fashion of argument or language, has vital secrets unknown to this man, grown old in search into such matters. Indeed, the work of his later years has included the production in Russian of simple treatises conveying the essential doctrine of teachers so remote from us in place and time as Lao-tze, Mentzius, Confucius, Buddha, Socrates, Diogenes, Francis of Assisi.

I have not spoken of the stories of Tolstoy's later years. Simple, strong, beautiful in every aspect of goodness, they show forth the one spirit. He himself is right in laying little stress on these, however, for they serve little purpose but to rouse emotion, soon to pass. Not mere emotion, but the illumination of emotion by reason, is our need; and Tolstoy's power is to fulfil this need. And yet one of these stories, *Work While Ye Have the Light*, is most effective both in wakening emotion and in directing it by reason. It is a tale of the second century, and in its incidents and discussions, gives an account of primitive Christian life and thought which powerfully impresses one as necessarily true in spirit and form.

A word must be said about *The Kreutzer Sonata*. Few people *read* books, or so many would not have missed the teaching of this one. No doubt the strong, tragic incidents of the story of jealousy and murder overshadow the reasoned statements and conclusion it conveys, and leave superficial minds with an impression of horror, as though all that is holy had been dragged in the mud, rather than with the conclusion that only one way of escape from the temptations and disasters of sex is open to mankind: the way, namely,

of purity of thought and life. This, chastity as an ideal, is the substance and the sum of Tolstoy's mind on the sex-relation. Mainly for his expositions of "Non-resistance" and "Chastity," Tolstoy has earned the opposition of many who suffer from want of comprehension of that which, and him whom, they condemn.

## VIII

What, then, is this "faith" of Leo Tolstoy? His latest setting-forth of it is in *The Gospel in Brief*. It is not a superstition, but *a reasoned conviction as to the nature and possibilities of human life*.

This faith has existed always. The world's great teachers have all held it, and have been great by teaching and living it. A belief in a Supreme Power of Righteousness; a belief that welfare lies in doing only Righteousness; a belief that life consists not in the Body but in the Spirit; that the Righteous Spirit is eternal; and that the Nature of the Spirit is at variance with the Nature of the Body, which would draw it, by power of needs and appetites, into unrighteousness. That is all. "Live to the Spirit, die to the body"—the *necrosis* of the Gospel.

Here, in our day once more, is a widely-heard man *who believes this, and so lives*. He is not alone. Thousands of his obscure countrymen who, in seclusion from the world, have held the same faith for generations, are being at this time slain by the Government of "Holy Russia." And he, near the end of his bodily life, speaks across the continents the Truth for which martyrs, ancient and modern, have died and are dying. He is called a "pessimist"! He who tells us that the world's ice is breaking, for the Sun of Righteousness is gathering power, as does the sun in spring; he who waits his end in peace and tranquillity, though become an alien to his former friends and condition, deprived by exile of his spiritual friends, and wholly obnoxious to a terrorist government and a church whose pretensions and deeds he has exposed to the

utmost. No, he is no pessimist; rather let us call him the supreme optimist. Such an optimist as Jesus, who said, in view of the cross, "My joy is fulfilled."

The greatness of Tolstoy is, that he has recognised a greater than himself, namely, the Jesus in the Gospel. How differently from Strauss or Renan has Tolstoy conceived that teacher, "mild and sweetly reasonable," yet the destroyer of priesthood and kingship! No "second person of the Trinity," but a living "Son of God"; no miraculously-born prodigy, but "a man like unto ourselves," though of holy and just life; not an innocent bearing the punishment of the guilty, but "the holy one and the just," slain as a heretic and a rebel by our ignorant sin,—this is the man Christ Jesus, as seen by Tolstoy. This Jesus is the arch-opponent of the "Social System" that prevailed in His day, and prevails in ours. He cares nothing for our vested interests, ancient institutions, venerable traditions, art and culture of centuries. "Sweep all away," He would say, "and begin again from the root. The property, the institutions, traditions, art and culture, of your Society are poisoned at the root. You have made 'getting,' and not 'giving' the maxim of your whole economy. Repent, enter the kingdom of heaven, which is ready to your hand; and you shall find,—not the parody of good which is the infrequent best your Society possesses, not riches extorted from poverty, not institutions which perpetuate oppression and delusion in the names of justice and religion, not traditions which make vain the truth, the law, of God, not art and culture which minister to idleness and debauchery,—not these, but the commonwealth of the kingdom of heaven on earth, the freedom and enlightenment which truth brings, the beauty of reasonable labour and the 'mildness and sweet reasonableness' which are the art and culture of the kingdom of heaven,—all these you shall find as the sincere fruit of a tree of life, healthy at the root. And you who are now voices crying in the wilderness, who must cast your lives into the scale against the



leaden iniquity of the times,—remember that you truly perish, not in withstanding the iniquity, but in submitting to it. Die, that you may live.”

Such is the message of Jesus, repeated by Tolstoy; a message for all men. Yet, strange! there are, as we have seen, those in England who tell us that Tolstoy's method and example are for Russia more particularly, where they have military conscription and no franchise; and while Tolstoy is very true, very heroic,—for Russia,—he has no meaning for England! These people have not reflected upon what I have already pointed out, namely, that among all modern societies, states, the differences are superficial only; all equally rest on that same basis of organised violence, rights of property, war, competition, which Jesus discovered and opposed utterly with His life and His death, in the old Roman and Jewish world. John in Patmos heard the voice saying against Babylon, “Come out of her, O my people, lest ye become partakers of her iniquities, and lest her plagues come upon you.” And Tolstoy, bidding men return to, and have faith in, the Spirit of Love which works by Truth, is again proclaiming our civilization to be the prophetic Babylon, from which we must come out, and enter into newness of life. Peace, goodwill, truth spoken in love,—these must draw those who have the spirit of Christ into true social relations, drawing them out of their present relations in society. In doing this there is a *necrosis* for Englishmen not less than for Russians.

The faith of Tolstoy reasons thus. Either our life proceeds from Nothing, or from a Power of Evil, or from a Power of Good. It is inconceivable that Something has come from Nothing; but for the man who so thinks, there is only, for him, to eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow he dies. If such a life satisfies a man, let him take it, but of him the Spirit of Life says, “Thou fool!” That we proceed from a Power of Evil is the world's actual faith and orthodoxy. For do we not say, “*The Power that made us, has put us where we are COMPELLED to do evil; to avoid the evils*



*of pain and death, we must (if only a little) compete, fight, take part in, compromise with, wrong"?* This is only to say that the Life which gives us our Life, the Reason reflected in our Reason, the Love that inspires our Love, is a cheat, a mocker. Indeed, we are Devil-worshippers; believing that the most dangerous thing in life is Love, and the most unreasonable, Truth. So we say of Tolstoy, who surrenders to these, "Very fine and heroic; the man is a saint, a prophet; but a little mad, and not for us."

We ask for his proof of what he teaches,—just as Jesus was asked for His authority. And the reply can only be, "Be good, and you will do good; be good and do good, and you will get good—full measure, pressed down, running over. Do not fear for your lives; have faith in the Power of Good, and He will prove Himself to you."

The entrance to the good life is strait and narrow; few there be that find it. But those few are the salt of the earth, the light of the world, the city, the society, set on a hill. Emperors and kings, statesmen and soldiers, priests and pedants, leaders and masters, think the world holds together by them; in truth, they are the world's incubus, the preventers of peace, the perversion of wisdom, the darkening of light. Our prophets, our saviours, are the men of conscience and courage, who die to the body, and live to the Spirit, in which is the only true, reasonable, enduring life; and who by word and example inspire mankind with man's own, already born, growing, proper soul, the new nature of the Sons of God. Of these prophets and saviours, by proof plain in the lives of many at this moment, Leo Tolstoy is one.

JOHN C. KENWORTHY.

## Henrik Ibsen

**A**MONG the prophets of the latter part of the nineteenth century, Henrik Ibsen ranks high and from the point of view of our posterity will rank yet higher; this is so on account of the fine quality of of his work, because of the widespread interest and discussion aroused by it, and because of its deep and far reaching influence. He is—a label never accurately fits a man—not so much a prophet, a foreteller of what is to come, as a protester, a true seer of much that actually is. Ibsen the social protestant, however, is only one part of the Ibsen whom we know and study; his genius has been manifested in two distinct ways: firstly as dramatic poet—for his early prose dramas are essentially poetic—and only later as dramatic satiriser and exposé of social conventionalities. This division is in a certain sense more apparent than real, for there is a true unity about his genius, and the poet of *Lady Inger of Östråt* is still a poet in *The Wild Duck* and *The Master Builder*.

It is indeed as poet that Ibsen makes the deepest appeal to those of his admirers who are not merely members of the clique which made of his strenuous writings—such is the irony of circumstance!—more or less of a fashionable cult. It is as a poet, therefore, that we have mainly to consider him when dealing with the literary “forces” of Europe in the nineteenth century. The thoughts and methods of the poet stamp his work throughout, though we get the poetry of his later years through the technical medium of prose dramas, for they are in essence no less truly poetical—often more deeply so—than the actual lyrical

outbursts of the rhyming apothecary's apprentice and medical student.

Among the prominent individualities of Northern Europe of his time, the figure of Ibsen stands a dominating if gloomy one—no less surely dominating his contemporaries than three centuries earlier in England Shakespeare dominated his. This must not be mistaken for a comparison of the English and Norwegian poets, although time will probably prove one similarity in the acceptance of Ibsen's work by the most diverse nations. Like Shakespeare in giving us very real individuals, true representatives of their time and country, he yet gives us human types, for his Nora and Torvald, his Lady Inger, his Dr. Stockmann, his Bernick, are persons with kin in all countries.

Ibsen, if a dominating figure, is a gloomy one, it has been said, and indeed his gloom—not necessarily pessimism—has been dealt with *ad nauseam* by many writers on the subject. It seems to be a matter of temperament fostered by environment. There is not space to enlarge upon Ibsen's life-story, but a biographical outline at least is a serviceable introduction to a description of his work. He was born at Skien, March 20, 1828, of parentage which was of mixed German and Scotch extraction; Norwegian blood in Norway's greatest poet being almost untraceable. His parents belonged to the local "aristocracy," but when he was eight years of age his father became insolvent and the family had to endure suburban poverty. An introspective melancholy was somewhat fostered by the circumstances of his early surroundings in a small provincial seaport, and an impressionable nature and tenacious memory together made the life of his native town—which he left as a lad of sixteen—later afford the poet plentiful material when writing *Brand* and some of the social dramas.

Fired at first with a keen desire for the study of art, Ibsen was compelled by his parents' circumstances to give up any ambition of this sort and to become

apprentice to an apothecary, in which position he found himself in the town of Grimstad at the age of sixteen. The youth was an ambitious one, and, determined that if compelled to adopt an uncongenial profession he would at least rise in it, he at once resolved to study medicine and get a doctor's degree. At Grimstad he began his medical studies, and there too, first awakened in him the power of expressing his latent poetry. The time was one of storm and stress in the world of European politics (1848-49); France was in the throes of one of her ever recurring revolutions, Hungary was in revolt under Kossuth, Italy was fighting for freedom aided by Garibaldi and Mazzini, Denmark and Germany were at daggers drawn. The young poet threw himself with all a young poet's emphatic ardour on the side of freedom, and wrote a number of fine stirring pieces of verse—a lapsus which the good citizens of Grimstad might have forgiven (or ignored) had he not further had the temerity (he an apothecary's apprentice yet under age) to speak as ardently as he wrote. The result was that he found himself in serious trouble with his fellow townsmen. The opposition of mediocrity strengthens the sinews of genius—Shelley did not become the more orthodox by being expelled from Oxford for atheism—and Ibsen, as he has put it, remained on a war-footing against the little world in which he found himself stuck fast by circumstance and the requirements of life.”

The resolve to become a doctor seems curiously enough to have determined Ibsen's career as a poet. He was to be examined in Sallust's *Catiline* and Cicero's *Orations*, and the study of these two works set his mind upon realising the character of Catiline, and the direct result was his drama of *Catilina*, in which the hero himself is idealised by the poet into an idealist indignant with his generation.

The year 1850 saw an important change in the outer circumstances of Ibsen's life, when he left the little seaport of Grimstad and proceeded to Christiania to complete his medical studies. During the same



summer he wrote a one-act play entitled *The Warrior's Mound* (or Grave), which was acted three times at the Christiania Theatre, and is chiefly of interest as a faint foreshadowing of the later Viking drama. Three nights' run does not nowadays seem anything to be proud of, but time and place account for much, and fifty years ago in Christiania it meant an important step towards literary success, if not that success itself. Ibsen at once gave up all idea of studying medicine, and threw himself with some other ardent young men into the political movement of the time. This was not for long. Nature had marked him out as a poet and as a kind of Chorus to the drama of modern life. During the first year and a half of his emancipation in Christiania Ibsen acted as journalist and political satirist, and, further, wrote a number of short poems more and more tinged with the mystic melancholy which is one of the characteristics of his work, and which some of his critics would have us believe to be the main characteristic. In November, 1851, he was appointed "theatrical poet" at Bergen, with a small salary and travelling allowance. A year or so later a dramatic piece from his pen, *St. John's Eve*, was given at his theatre. It is described as "a fanciful play of the *Midsummer Night's Dream* class," and has not been published.

In 1855—the poet being then eight and twenty—came *Dame Inger of Östråt*, a thoroughly mature work, worthy to rank along with what is best in historical drama. This intense tragedy, though founded upon sixteenth century history, is yet almost wholly the invention of the poet. It is actually but little more historical than say Shakespeare's *Hamlet* or *Macbeth*, in which historical figures are utilized in a setting of pure romance. Parallels between the actual and the poetic do not, however, here concern us. Lady Inger appears as the widowed mistress of the castle at Östråt at a time when Norway, Sweden and Denmark were simmering with internecine troubles. She is something of a problem to both parties—to that which repre-

sents her own long-suffering people, and to that which supports the conquering rule of Gustavus Vasa. Her position is, indeed, a difficult one; bound by a girlish oath to support the popular cause, she has yet been forced by circumstance to marry an official of the court party, by whom she has three daughters. Before her marriage however, she has already borne a son to Sten Sturle, the popular leader. When the play opens one daughter has been married to a Dane, the second has died after having been betrayed by Councillor Nils Lykke, and the third is at home at Östråt vowing vengeance against Lucia's unknown betrayer, with whom in the course of the tragedy she falls in love. The natural woman Inger, made a mother by love, with her love for that son of whom she has known nothing for twenty years, since he was taken away as an infant by his father, may be contrasted with the same individual become the "official" wife of a court official. Her daughters are mere incidents in an unhappy career, whereas the halo of early romance and imagination invests the past and the long unknown son with attractiveness greater than they can possess. This is shown to us by the ready way in which Inger sacrifices her daughters one after the other in her efforts to obtain a sense of true security and the possession of her son. That son is in the power of Peter Kanzler, a leader of the downtrodden popular party, the triumph of which seems doubtful indeed. To oppose the powers that be, with whom she has got ever more closely bound, might prove fatal to all her hopes for her loved son—and so we find her, apparently infirm of purpose, trying to steer a double course, afraid to throw in her lot finally with either side. This want of courage, and the underlying ambition which accompanies it, are finally the means which bring about the ruin and the murder—at her own instigation, too—of her son whom she has been led to confuse with his younger half-brother, the legally-born Count Sture.

The tragedy is truly a great one, Inger a clever

combination of the unscrupulous scheming of a Lady Macbeth and the vacillation of a Hamlet. Perhaps the play is least satisfactory for the weakness of character in the women. Inger has not the courage to take a side and abide the issue; and her daughter, Elina, of whom we expect something better at the outset, gives her love almost unquestioningly at first sight to a man whom she knows to be of evil reputation where women are concerned, and finds herself, "in the eyes of God," the bride of her sister's betrayer.

Two years after the successful production of *Dame Inger of Östråt*, the poet left the Bergen Theatre and returned to Christiania, as Director of the Norwegian Theatre there. His next work was *The Warriors of Helgeland*, a tragedy of Viking days, which was treated with scant courtesy. The piece is partially based upon the *Volsunga Saga* and *Egil's Saga*, and other old writings, but here, as in his historical plays, the author took but a hint from existing material—"it was no more than a point of solid ground whence he set forth on a voyage in the world of his thoughts and fancies." Here reappears the story of Sigurd Fafnirsbane and Brynhild as that of Sigurd Viking and Hjordis. The last named character is, however, transformed; Ibsen's Hjordis lacking all the better qualities of the mythic Brynhild. With considerable dramatic interest the play—gloomy tragedy as it is throughout—is one that may well be reckoned among the poet's earlier successes. Ibsen revels seemingly in the fine, rugged, honourable characters of the old sagas, in their strenuous courage, their whole-hearted contempt of death. In this play, too, he succeeds in limning an almost wholly attractive woman—a rare feat for him, genius though he is—in the person of Sigurd's wife, Dagny. To many of Ibsen's critics this play marks a definite change in the poet's methods and objects, as being a breaking with the old romantic school to which his earlier work more properly belongs. One critic (Boyesen) protests that this is not so, and yet reads into it a significance not intended, as



it seems to me by the dramatist, and a significance, too, which would render it yet closer to the later "social" dramas. "He wishes," says Boyesen, "to hold up to the respectable law-abiding pygmies of to-day these great types of lawless Norse heroism."

Very definite, indeed, is the change which comes with the next important piece from the poet's pen. This was the three act *Comedy of Love*, which was written in the summer of 1862, and published as an extra New Year's number of the *Illustreret Nyhedsblad*. This, to use Mr. P. H. Wicksteed's words (*Four Lectures on Henrik Ibsen*, p. 102), is Ibsen's "first work on the conditions of modern society, his first satire, and the first utterance that roused that indignant resentment which has from time to time flamed out against him from that day to this." *The Comedy of Love* is the first of a long series of brilliant successes in the way of relentless social satire, and when considering Ibsen's work as a whole, one cannot but regret that no translator has yet been found to give us a complete English version of it.<sup>1</sup> The extracts which Mr. Edmund Gosse has Englished in Herr Jaeger's biography of Ibsen point him out as a fitting person for the task. "The whole piece," says Jaeger, "from beginning to end, is a satire on marriage for love only. It is just this, and the way in which love breaks down in such unions, which is the subject-matter of the plot. At the very moment when love first appears on the scene it receives the sentence of death. First come the aunts and friends and 'destroy the poetry of love' with their intrusive interest in the betrothed couple; and then comes marriage with its struggle for social advantages, and the care of children. What begins as a festival, ends, as a rule, in vulgar commonplace; and instead of being uplifted by their life together, most couples are dragged down to mere stolid and brainless habit:—

<sup>1</sup> Since this was written a translation has been announced as in preparation for inclusion in a new series of modern plays to be published by Mr. Grant Richards.



'Use your experience; look around in life—  
 Each pair of lovers takes for creed and psalter  
 That millions came to them as man and wife.  
 They gallop harum scarum to the altar;  
 They make a home, spoiled pets of happiness;  
 A space goes by in faith-intoxication;  
 A length a day of reckoning dawns! ah! yes!  
 And proves mere bankruptcy their jubilation.  
 Bankrupt the flower of youth on matron's cheek;  
 Bankrupt the bloom of thought within her mind;  
 Bankrupt the husband's courage; tame and meek  
 Each flame that once flew blazing on the wind;  
 Bankrupt the whole condition of affairs,  
 Yet still they're quoted, on the Bourse of pairs,  
 A first-class firm of love, the best you'll find.'

This is how Straamand and his Maren, Styver and Miss Skjære, have fared, and so it is with Lind and Anna. All these three couples have plighted themselves 'for love,' but their love is not strong enough to hold out:—

'Of all the flame scarcely the smoke is left!  
*Sic transit gloria amoris*, Svanhild.'

It is with love, in short, as it is with religion: it loses its fervour as soon as it is made public. The human beings of our day are too petty-minded to love; and the tragical part of the business is, that they still live on in the belief that they do love. In contrast to all this torpor stand Falk and Svanhild. They see and know it, and it revolts them. But even they are too completely the children of their time to believe in the triumph of their own love over the dead level of commonplace everyday life." The two *true* lovers—from Ibsen's point of view—find the only chance of keeping their love eternal is to separate and keep it as a mere memory. Surely a *reductio ad absurdum* of the whole matter.<sup>1</sup>

In his next play the author reverted to a historic subject, and in 1863 wrote at fever heat in the short

<sup>1</sup> This question of Ibsen's attitude towards marriage in this poem and the social plays is finely dealt with by Mr. Wicksteed in the last few pages of his *Four Lectures on Henrik Ibsen*.

period of six weeks his magnificent play, *The Pretenders*; a work in which the dramatist adheres more closely to history than in the earlier plays, but into which he has imported very strong dramatic feeling. The piece deals with the struggles of Hakon and Skule for the kingship of Norway in the first part of the thirteenth century, and abounds in fine situations and strong poetical passages. The basal idea seems to be that man to do anything must "to his own self be true," he cannot act out another man's thought; for Skule, whose ambition it is to be king, and who thinks to adopt the "great king thought" of his rival, finds that he has no faith in himself, and is consequently doomed to failure from the very outset of his enterprise. The play abounds in striking scenes and memorable utterances; notably the scenes between the doubting Skule and Jatgeir the Skald, and those in which Bishop Nicholas appears. This same Bishop Nicholas is a magnificent literary creation—owing little to his historical prototype, and taking rank in our memory with, to use the inevitable comparison, Shakespearean distinctness.

From the fourth act of *The Pretenders* a passage may be quoted which shall serve to show the deep thought of Ibsen's work, and the terse, direct manner of that thought's presentation. Skule is seeming to succeed against his rival; he has just been landed by his men, and, left alone for a moment, is at once a prey to doubt.

*King Skule.* Norway's saga tells of no such thing; it has never been so yet. Paul Flida answers me as I answered Hakon. Are there then upward as well as downward steps? Stands Hakon as high over me as I over Paul Flida? Has Hakon an eye for unborn thoughts that is lacking in me? Who stood so high as Harald Hårfager in the days when every headland had its king, and he said: Now they must fall; hereafter shall there be but one? He threw the old saga to the winds, and made a new saga. (*A pause; he*

*paces up and down lost in thought ; then he stops.*) Can one man take God's calling from another, as he takes weapons and gold from his fallen foe? Can a Pretender clothe himself in a King's life-task as he can put on the kingly mantle? The oak that is felled to be a ship's timber, can it say, Nay, I will be the mast, I will take on me the task of the fir-tree, point upwards, tall and shining, bear the golden vane at my top, spread bellying white sails to the sunshine, and meet the eyes of all men from afar?—No, no, thou heavy, gnarled oak-trunk; thy place is beneath the keel; there shalt thou lie, and do thy work, unheard of and unseen by those aloft in the daylight. It is thou that shalt hinder the ship from being whelmed in the storm; while the mast, with the golden vane and the bellying sail, shall bear it forward toward the new, toward the unknown, toward alien strands and the saga of the future! (*Vehemently*) Since Hakon uttered his great king-thought, I can see no other thought in the world but that only. If I cannot take it and make substance of it, I see no other thought to fight for. (*Broodingly*) And can I not make it mine? If I cannot, whence comes my great love for Hakon's thought?

*Jatgeir (enters from the back).* Forgive my coming, lord King——

*King Skule.* You come to my wish, Skald.

*Jatgeir.* I overheard some townsfolk at my lodging talking darkly of——

*King Skule.* Let that wait. Tell me, Skald—you who have fared far abroad in strange lands—have you ever seen a woman love another's child? Not only be kind to it—'tis not that I mean; but *love* it—love it with the warmest passion of her soul.

*Jatgeir.* That can only those women do who have no child of their own to love.

*King Skule.* Only those women——?

*Jatgeir.* And chiefly women who are barren.

*King Skule.* Chiefly the barren? They love the children of others with all their warmest passion?

*Jatgeir.* That will oftentimes befall.

*King Skule.* And does it not sometimes befall that such a barren woman will slay another's child because she herself has none?

*Jatgeir.* Ay, ay; but in that she does unwisely.

*King Skule.* Unwisely?

*Jatgeir.* Ay, for she gives the gift of sorrow to her whose child she slays.

*King Skule.* Think you the gift of sorrow is a great good?

*Jatgeir.* Yes, lord.

*King Skule* (*looks fixedly at him*). Methinks there are two men in you, Icelfander. When you sit amid the household at the merry feast, you draw cloak and hood over all your thoughts; when one is alone with you, sometimes you seem to be of those among whom one were fain to choose his friend. How comes it?

*Jatgeir.* When you go to swim in the river, my lord, you would scarce strip you where the people pass by to church; you seek a sheltered privacy.

*King Skule.* True, true.

*Jatgeir.* My soul has the like shyness; therefore I do not strip me when there are many in the hall.

*King Skule.* Hm! (*A short pause.*) Tell me, Jatgeir, how came you to be a skald? Who taught you skaldcraft?

*Jatgeir.* Skaldcraft cannot be taught, my lord.

*King Skule.* Cannot be taught? How came it, then?

*Jatgeir.* I got the gift of sorrow, and I was a skald.

*King Skule.* Then 'tis the gift of sorrow the skald has need of?

*Jatgeir.* I needed sorrow; others there may be who need faith, or joy—or doubt——

*King Skule.* Doubt as well?

*Jatgeir.* Ay; but then must the doubter be strong and sound.

*King Skule.* And whom call you the unsound doubter?

*Jatgeir.* He who doubts of his own doubt.



*King Skule (slowly).* That, methinks, were death.

*Jatgeir.* 'Tis worse; 'tis neither day nor night.

*King Skule (quickly, as if shaking off his thoughts).* Where are my weapons? I will fight and act, not think.<sup>1</sup>

This scene, this whole play indeed, abounds in fine passages—passages which are the finer in that, dealing forcefully with the matter in hand, they are yet pregnant with meaning applicable in many circumstances; are, in a word, such stuff as quotations are made of.

Next in order of commencement but not of completion comes the two-part drama of *Emperor and Galilean* (1873). This may, however, be briefly dismissed here as being the last of the dramas based upon historical foundations. It is in its very essence a poetic play in which are powerfully illustrated the great conflict between the Pagan and Christian ideals for domination of the civilized world. The double play, for such it is, consisting of two five-act dramas, *Cæsar's Apostasy* and *The Emperor Julian*, is named *Emperor and Galilean* from the dominant motive running throughout. The work has been less discussed in England than other of the poet's work, not because of its lesser interest, but probably because its non-actability has brought it less under the notice of the discussing public than the later pieces which have been presented at the theatres. It is, indeed, like much of the finest dramatic work, a play rather for the closet than the stage, and will repay many a careful reading. Julian, in his efforts to found the empire of the Galilean, and in his later desire to make the empire that of a Cæsar instead, is a magnificently conceived and splendidly portrayed individualization of the great Emperor.

Begun during the poet's first stay in Rome in 1864, the "world-historic drama" was not published until

<sup>1</sup> Translated by Mr. William Archer. From *Henrik Ibsen's Prose Dramas* (Walter Scott, 1890).

1873, and in the interval the author had found a new method of propounding the problems which set themselves before him as one of the century's great Doubters.

In 1862 we have seen that the poet broke the sequence of his poetic dramas with a magnificent and scathing piece of social satire, *The Comedy of Love*. Two years later had come *The Pretenders*, and then in 1866 that peculiarly powerful and deeply searching example of the work of the poet and doubter, *Brand*. To deal at all fully with this poem would occupy more space than I have to devote to Ibsen's entire work, but English readers desiring a scholarly translation and a fine critical exposition of the poem must be referred to Professor C. H. Herford's version, given in the original metres, with an introduction and notes (Heinemann, 1894). We have Brand acting on a high call, a circumstance which, as Dr. Jaeger has pointed out, is characteristic again and again of the heroes of Ibsen's plays. His greatest types are men convinced of a "call," or their opposites the men who doubt strongly. Brand is a priest who knows no compromise in the exercise of his Christian faith in its truest spirit, with the result that he finds himself in active conflict with everyone with whom he is brought into contact in a Christian country. Calling upon others for "all or nothing" in the way of self-sacrifice, he finds himself bound to obey the same tragic formula :

"ALL or NOTHING I will have;  
If that call you disobey  
You have flung your life away."

The exercise of human will with almost superhuman sternness, such is Brand's action in this terrible poem. But the doubter-poet comes out at the very close, for Brand, about to be engulfed in an avalanche, cries,

"God, I plunge into death's night—  
Shall they wholly miss Thy Light  
Who unto man's utmost might  
Will 'd — ?

[The avalanche buries him; the whole valley is swallowed up.]

A VOICE

[calls through the crushing thunder]

He is the God of Love."

His conception of human life has lacked the element of a true love of humanity.

The year after *Brand* was published, *Peer Gynt* appeared; a work very dissimilar in many ways, yet notable for points of contact. Here, in place of the dogmatic but unconventional priest with his relentless "all or nothing," in place of what has been called monotonous solemnity, we have the unstable wanderer who is all things by turns and nothing long. "In *Brand* the hero is an embodied protest against the poverty of spirit and half-heartedness that Ibsen rebelled against in his countrymen. In *Peer Gynt* the hero is himself the embodiment of that spirit." *Peer Gynt* is indeed a typical waverer, a man who cannot decide finally for himself on any subject. While the style of the poem is lighter, brighter, and more varied than in the earlier one. The hero wanders up and down in the world, always hesitating, always afraid of doing the irretrievable. His character may best be illustrated by a remark which he makes when a conscript peasant, who cannot leave the woman he loves without shame, maims himself by deliberately chopping off a finger. *Peer* considers the irrevocable action with wondering awe—"One might think of it, wish it, determine it even—but do it! no, that I can't understand." In this piece, as in its immediate predecessor, the poet was undoubtedly seeking to make plain to his countrymen some features of their national individuality which they were too prone to overlook. He seems, so to speak, to have detached himself from his environment, to have personified what to him seemed characteristics of the people, and then to have placed his individual in a number of scenes which should more or less strongly bring out those characteristics—to have reduced to an absurdity, in fact, the



least admirable qualities of his countrymen, their lack of strong individuality, their want of moral backbone.

These satiric poems were literary stepping-stones to a yet more notable expression of what has been loosely termed Ibsen's "message," that long and remarkable series of social plays which began in 1867 with *The League of Youth*, and of which the latest is *John Gabriel Borkmann*. In these plays—diverse as they are from one another in many ways—there runs throughout, not only the dubieties of the doubter of Society, but also uncompromising scorn of all social shams, the keen desire to pierce through the outward trappings of all social conventions, and to show us things as they are. Yet even here, relentless as is the method of the dramatist, he never really ceases to be a poet. Even in such so-called realism as *Ghosts*, and *The Wild Duck*, and others, the poetry is as certain as the forcefulness of the presentation.

This whole series of social dramas consists more or less of so many variations on one theme; all, that is to say, stress the falsities, the hollowness of conventional modern life. They do so in various ways and from different points of view, but essentially there is at bottom this root idea of the insufficiency of convention.

"After this splendid overture," says Herr Jaeger, having reviewed at length *Brand* and *Peer Gynt*, "the curtain rose in 1869 on the first genuine comedy of modern life which Norwegian literature ever produced. In *The Comedy of Love* Ibsen had already made an attempt in this direction; but at that time his indignation was too hot, and the outcome was polemical, not a comedy. He lashed his *dramatis personæ* instead of merely showing up their ridiculous side. In *Brand* the surges of his wrath had risen still higher, and Ibsen had devoted his pen almost wholly to argument and vituperation. But in *Peer Gynt* they had already sunk to a calm, and when he wrote *De Unges Forbund* (*The Young Men's League*), in 1868-69, the poet's



temper was so far pacified that he felt the redeeming power of laughter as he contemplated the types and circumstances he proposed to make the subject of his ridicule." The play met with an uproarious reception at the Christiania Theatre, the audience resenting the novelty of the play and accusing the author of dealing with the political situation from the stage. The whirligig of time brought its revenge, for when, in 1874, he turned home after a ten years' absence on the Continent, the poet found himself honoured as a prophet even in his own country. He was present at a performance of the *League of Youth*, and was enthusiastically received. He was fêted by the students, and delivered an address of an auto-biographical character, in the light of which all his latter plays should be considered. Here one passage must suffice :

" I cannot make a better use of so happy and joyful an occasion as this, than by offering an explanation and making a confession. I have never made my private concerns of any kind the subject of a literary work. These private facts and feelings seemed to me in earlier and harder times less important than I have since very often been able to understand. When the eider-duck's nest had been plundered once, twice, thrice, it had been robbed of many illusions and great hopes in life. Now what is poetry—poem-writing? It was not till late in life that my eyes were opened to perceive that to be a poet is, in fact, to be a seer ; but, note this, so to see that the thing seen is set before the public as the poet saw it. Now only what is part of our experience can be thus seen and assimilated. And this experience is the secret of the poetry of the new times. Everything that I have written during the last ten years is part of my intellectual experience. No writer goes through his experience alone. What he has known in life his fellow countrymen have known too."

In this passage from a significant speech we may recognise one of those things which make Ibsen's plays so valuable ; this is the belief that he re-

flected the thoughts, the doubts of modern Norway; his experience was taken as the unexpressed experience of others, which he, in consequence of certain gifts, was able to put before his fellow countrymen in the concrete. It is, perhaps, ever so; the poet is "before his time," not as an anachronism, but because he is able to express in some significant fashion the thoughts, the hopes, or the doubts which, incapable of expression otherwise, are labouring in the breasts of his fellows. It is not always that this is recognised at the time; more often, indeed, we are ready to protest emphatically against views which may be said to be latent in our own minds, and with which time—aided by our poet as mouthpiece—soon familiarises us. So it was that the people who in 1869 stormed at Ibsen's play, hailed him in 1874 as a modern prophet who had risen among them.

It is not possible within the scope of a few pages to deal separately with these dramas, or even to touch upon the different social problems dealt with by the great modern doubter. During the past dozen years or so the English reading and play-going public has been familiarised with many of these plays, ever in fact since the first representation here of *A Doll's House*, that wildly abused piece which was nearly ten years old before it held the attention of the English public. Two years before producing the forceful marital tragedy of *Nora and Torvold Helmer*, Ibsen had written *The Pillars of Society* (1877); and three years later he wrote *An Enemy of the People* (1882). These two plays deal in brilliantly clever fashion with some of the shams of social life. In *The Pillars of Society* the poet seeks to lay bare the hypocrisy of a society which—because of those hypocrisies—may be looked upon as one more or less in a state of dissolution. The smug self-satisfaction of the "pillars" who occupy prominent places in a small coast town, who pose as virtuous philanthropic persons, while their whole lives are based in lying and chicanery—these

are admirably rendered. In *An Enemy of the People* we have the same kind of situation reversed; in it we find the doctor of a holiday resort hounded by his fellows for refusing to blink the fact that the bath to which the town owes its prosperity is "simply a pestiferous hole." In the emphatic rectitude of Dr. Stockmann there is a fresh version—more homely and less mystic—of the uncompromising Brand.

A passage from the fourth act of this play may stand as an example of the straightforward hitting of the great critic of modern life. The doctor has been howled down in an attempt to enlighten his fellow-citizens by addressing them on the subject of the tainted supply of their wealth. It would cost money and time for new pipes to be laid, and better, says the "compact majority," that the evil should continue than that visitors should be discouraged from coming and spending their money in the place.

*Dr. Stockmann.* Well, fellow-citizens, I'll say no more about our leading men. If any one imagines, from what I've just said, that I want to make short work of these gentlemen to-night, he's mistaken—altogether mistaken. For I cherish the comforting belief that these laggards, these relics of a decaying order of thought, are diligently cutting their own throats. They need no doctor to hasten their end. And these are not the people that constitute the most serious danger to society; it is not they who are most active in poisoning our spiritual life, and making a plague-spot of the ground beneath our feet; it is not they who are the most dangerous enemies of truth and freedom in our society.

*Cries from all sides.* Who, then? Who is it? Name, name!

*Dr. Stockmann.* Yes, you may be sure I'll name them! For *this* is the great discovery I made yesterday! (*In a louder tone*) The most dangerous foe to truth and freedom in our midst is the compact ma-



majority. Yes; it's the confounded, compact, liberal majority! There, I've told you!

*(Immense disturbance in the room. . . . At last quiet is restored.)*

*Aslaksen.* I request the speaker to withdraw his ill-considered expressions.

*Dr. Stockmann.* Never, Mr. Aslaksen! For it's this very majority that robs me of my freedom, and wants to forbid me to speak the truth.

*Hovstad.* Right is always on the side of the majority.

*Billing.* Yes, and truth too, strike me dead!

*Dr. Stockmann.* The majority is never right. Never, I say! That's one of the social lies a free, thinking man is bound to rebel against. Who make up the majority in any given country? Is it the wise men or the fools? I think we must agree that the fools are in a terrible, overwhelming majority, all the wide world over. But how the deuce can it ever be right for the fools to rule over the wise men? *(Noise and shouts.)* Yes, yes, you can shout me down, but you cannot gainsay me. The majority has might—unhappily—but right it has not. I and the few, the individuals, are right. The minority is always right. *(Renewed disturbances.)*

*Hovstad.* Ha, ha! So Dr. Stockmann has turned aristocrat since the day before yesterday!

*Dr. Stockmann.* I have said that I won't waste a word on the little, narrow-chested, short-winded crew that lie in our wake. Pulsating life has nothing more to do with them. I will rather speak of the few individuals among us who have made all the new, germinating truths their own. These men stand, as it were, at the outposts, so far in the van that the compact majority has not yet reached them; and *there* they fight for truths that are too lately born into the world's consciousness to have won over the majority.

*Hovstad.* So the doctor's a revolutionist now.

*Dr. Stockmann.* Yes, by Heaven, I am, Mr. Hovstad.



I'm going to revolt against the lie that truth resides in the majority. What sort of truths do the majority rally round? Truths that are decrepit with age. When a truth is as old as that, it's in a fair way to become a lie, gentlemen (*laughter and jeers*). Yes, yes, you may believe me or not as you please; but truths are by no means the wiry Methusalehs some people think them. A normally constituted truth lives—let me say—as a rule, seventeen or eighteen years; at the outside twenty; seldom longer. And truths so stricken in years are always shockingly thin; yet it's not till then that the majority takes them up, and recommends them to society as wholesome food. I can assure you there's not much nutriment in that sort of fare; you may take my word as a doctor for that. All these majority truths are like last year's salt pork; they're like rancid, mouldy ham, producing all the moral scurvy that devastates society.

I might go on quoting from Dr. Stockmann's strong indictment of the majority, but must pause. The meeting ends by the doctor declaring roundly, "I love my native town so well, I would rather ruin it than see it flourishing upon a lie"; and his instant condemnation by the majority—a fine stroke of the dramatist—as "an enemy of the people."

Between *The Doll's House* and *An Enemy of the People* came that piece of intense physiological and psychological tragedy, *Ghosts*—that terrible dramatic *précis* of the doctrine of heredity. The outburst of public indignation which this piece caused was more or less directly responsible for the form of its immediate successor. In Dr. Stockmann suffering, for having dared to tell his townsfolk the simple truth, we can easily recognise the decried dramatist who had declared to his countrymen that much of their life was rotten at its source.

Small matter for wonder is there in the fact that public opinion has often been at first against the utter-

ances of this far and deep-seeing critic of modern life. From 1882, each succeeding two years has seen the production of a further play dealing with some fresh phase of the ever-varying relations of men and women in the curiously complex social machinery of modern life—each of them dealing with life, as has been said, with all the stern logic of reality. *The Wild Duck*, *Rosmersholm*, *The Lady from the Sea*, *Hedda Gabler*, *The Master Builder*, *Little Eyolf*, and *John Gabriel Borkman* have succeeded one another at regular intervals. It is not surprising that so uncompromising a pointer out of the faults and vices of the community should raise strong feeling against him, and each succeeding play of this series has found a public ready to resent its sometimes sordid truthfulness, and to dismiss its author with the ill-considered name of pessimist. Happily, however, in his native country as well as abroad, he has not wanted a large number of readers who, without minimising the painfulness of much that he has written, yet see in him neither pessimist nor optimist, but a truly great delineator of modern life stripped of all conventional pretences. He is a strong protester against the smug self-gratulation of our age, one who lays his finger on a sore here and a sore there in the body social, and says in effect, cure this, and this, before you arrogantly boast of your progress, your civilization, your cleanliness. He is no flatterer of his fellows; but, nevertheless, a seer in very truth.

WALTER JERROLD.



## APPENDIX

### WORDSWORTH

(1770-1850)

Born at Cockermouth . . . . .	<i>April 7</i>	1770
St. John's, Cambridge . . . . .		1787-91
Residence in Dorset . . . . .		1795-97
Germany . . . . .		1798-99
Grasmere . . . . .		1799
Marriage with Mary Hutchison . . . . .		1802
Appointed Comptroller of Stamps for Westmoreland . . . . .		1814
Retirement on Pension of £300 . . . . .		1842
Poet Laureate . . . . .		1843
Death . . . . .		1850

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Lyrical Ballads . . . . .	1798
"    "    with other poems . . . . .	1800
"    "    with Pastoral and other poems . . . . .	1802
"    "    . . . . .	1805
Poems in two volumes . . . . .	1807
The Excursion . . . . .	1810
First collected Edition of Poems . . . . .	1815
White Doe of Rylstone . . . . .	1815
Thanksgiving Ode . . . . .	1816
Peter Bell . . . . .	1819
The Waggoner, and Sonnets . . . . .	1819
Memorials of Tour on Continent . . . . .	1820
Ecclesiastical Sketches . . . . .	1822
Works published . . . . .	1827, 1828, 1832
Selections . . . . .	1831, 1834, 1843, etc.
Yarrow Revisited . . . . .	1835
Sonnets . . . . .	1838
Ode at Installation of Prince Albert . . . . .	1847
The Prelude . . . . .	1850

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## SHELLEY

(1792-1822)

Born at Field Place, Sussex . . . . .	1792
Sion House, Brentford . . . . .	1802-4
Eton . . . . .	1804-9
University College, Oxford . . . . .	1810
Expelled from Oxford. Engagement with Harriet Grove broken . . . . .	1811
Marriage with Harriet Westbrook at Edinburgh . . . . .	1811
Correspondence with Godwin. Visit to Ireland . . . . .	1812
Separation from Harriet Westbrook. Shelley and Mary Godwin leave for Italy . . . . .	1814
Death of Harriet and marriage with Mary Godwin . . . . .	1816
Custody of children obtained by Mr. Westbrook . . . . .	1817
Marlow . . . . .	1817-18
Italy . . . . .	1818
Death . . . . .	1822

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Margaret Nicholson . . . . .	1810
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Irish Proposals . . . . .	1812
Letter to Lord Ellenborough . . . . .	1812
The Devil's Walk . . . . .	1812
Queen Mab . . . . .	1813
Vindication of Natural Diet . . . . .	1813
Refutation of Deism . . . . .	1814
Alastor . . . . .	1816
Proposals for putting Reform to the Vote . . . . .	1817
Six Weeks' Tour in France . . . . .	1817
Revolt of Islam . . . . .	1818
Rosalind and Helen . . . . .	1819
The Cenci . . . . .	1819
Prometheus Unbound . . . . .	1820
Œdipus Tyrannus . . . . .	1820
Epipsychidion . . . . .	1821
Adonais . . . . .	1821
Hellas . . . . .	1822
Posthumous Poems . . . . .	1824
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## CARLYLE, THOMAS

(1795-1881)

- Born at Ecclefechan, Annandale . . . . . December 4 1795  
 Entered at Edinburgh, with a view to the Ministry . . . 1809  
 Mathematical tutorship at Annan . . . . . 1814  
 Schoolmaster at Kirkcaldy (Friendship with Irving) . . 1816  
 Schoolmastering and Ministry abandoned; studies for the  
     Bar at Edinburgh, and takes pupils . . . . . 1819  
 Religious crisis—Spiritual new birth . . . . . 1821  
 Tutor to Charles and Arthur Buller . . . . . 1822-24  
 London, Birmingham and Paris . . . . . 1824-25  
 Returns to Scotland, living at his father's farm, Hoddam  
     Hill . . . . . 1825  
 Marries Jane Baillie Welsh at Templand, and settles at  
     Comley Bank, Edinburgh . . . . . { 1826  
 Removes to Craigenputtock . . . . . 1828  
 London (lodgings at Ampton Street, Gray's Inn Road) . . 1831  
 Craigenputtock . . . . . 1832  
 Edinburgh, for brief time . . . . . 1833  
 London: Cheyne Row, Chelsea . . . . . 1834  
 Lectures at Willis's Rooms on German literature, etc. . . 1837-40  
 Literary reputation established . . . . . 1845  
 Alienation from Mill . . . . . 1849  
 Rector of Edinburgh . . . . . 1865  
 Death of Mrs. Carlyle (Jane Welsh) . . . . . 1866  
 Joined the Eyre Defence Committee . . . . . 1867  
 President of newly-formed London Library. . . . . 1870, 1881  
 Death, February 4th . . . . . 1881

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Translation of "Wilhelm Meister" . . . . . 1824  
 " " Legendre's Geometry . . . . . 1824  
 Life of Schiller (reprinted from *London Magazine*) . . . 1825  
 German Romance (4 vols.) . . . . . 1827  
 Sartor Resartus, from *Frazer's Magazine* (1833-1834) . . 1836  
 French Revolution . . . . . 1837

Chartism . . . . .	1839
Hero Worship . . . . .	1841
Past and Present . . . . .	1843
Cromwell . . . . .	1845
Latter-Day Pamphlets . . . . .	1850
Life of Sterling . . . . .	1851
Frederick the Great, Vols. I. II. . . . .	1858
"    "    Vol. III. . . . .	1862
"    "    "    IV. . . . .	1864
"    "    "    V. . . . .	1865
Inaugural address at Edinburgh . . . . .	1866
Reminiscences (published by Froude) . . . . .	1881
Miscellanies (5 vols.) . . . . .	1839, 1840, 1847, 1857
Reminiscences of my Irish Journey (1849). Edited by Froude . . . . .	1832

## AUTHORITIES

Reminiscences. Edited by Froude . . . . .	1881
Thomas Carlyle: history of the first forty years of his life. J. A. Froude . . . . .	1882
Thomas Carlyle: history of his life in London. (J. A. Froude)	1884
Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle, prepared by Carlyle, and edited by Froude . . . . .	1883
Correspondence of Carlyle and Emerson. Edited by C. E. Norton . . . . .	1883
Life of Carlyle. Dr. Garnett ("Great Writers" series) . . . . .	1887
Article by Leslie Stephen in Dict. of National Biography.	
Essay by R. Hutton: "Modern Guides of English Thought."	

## EMERSON

(1803-1882)

Born at Boston, Mass. . . . .	May 25	1803
Enters Harvard College, 1817; and graduates . . . . .		1821
Enters Divinity College to study for Ministry . . . . .		1825
Minister of the Second Church, Boston . . . . .		1829
Married to Ellen Tucker—September . . . . .		1829
Death of his wife . . . . .		1831
Resigns his pulpit, 1832; and travels to Europe, December.		1832
In England: visits Carlyle, etc., 1833, and returns to America.		
Married to Lidian Jackson . . . . .		1835
Public lecturing . . . . .		1836
England . . . . .		1847-48
Nominated for Rectorship of Glasgow University; defeated by Disraeli . . . . .		1876
Death . . . . .		1882

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Nature . . . . .	1836
Essays (1st series) . . . . .	1841
Dial (Edited) . . . . .	1841-44
Essays (2nd series) . . . . .	1844

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Poems . . . . .	1847
Miscellanies . . . . .	1849
Representative Men . . . . .	1850
English Traits . . . . .	1856
Conduct of Life . . . . .	1860
May Day, etc. . . . .	1867
Society and Solitude . . . . .	1870
The Wanderer (Edited) . . . . .	1871
Parnassus (Edited) . . . . .	1875
Letters and Social Aims . . . . .	1876
Correspondence: Carlyle and Emerson . . . . .	1883

J. E. Cabot, *Memoir of Emerson*.  
Ireland, A. *Life of Emerson*.  
Holmes, O. W. " "  
Cooke, J. W. " "  
Conway, M. D. " "*Emerson at Home and Abroad*.  
Dr. Garnett, *Emerson* ("Great Writers" series).  
Two Essays on Emerson. R. H. Hutton, "*Contemporary Thought and Thinkers*." (London: Macmillan & Co.)

(1809-1892)

Born at Somersby, Lincoln	1809
Louth Grammar School	1816-20
Trinity College, Cambridge	1828-31
Marriage with Miss Emily Sellwood	1850
Poet Laureate	1850
D.C.L. Oxford	1855
Honorary Fellow, Trinity, Camb.	1869
Peerage	1884
Death	Oct. 6 1892.

Poems by Two Brothers . . . . .	1826-7
Poems chiefly Lyrical (Wilson) . . . . .	1830
Poems (Moxon) . . . . .	1832-33
"The Princess" . . . . .	1842
In Memoriam . . . . .	1847
Maud. . . . .	1850
Idylls of the King . . . . .	1855
Enoch Arden . . . . .	1859
The Holy Grail . . . . .	1861
Gareth and Lynette . . . . .	1870
Queen Mary . . . . .	1872
Harold . . . . .	1875
Becket . . . . .	1877
Ballads and Poems (Kegan Paul) . . . . .	1878
The Cup and the Falcon . . . . .	1880
Tiresias . . . . .	1884
	1885



Locksley Hall, 60 years after. . . . .	1886
Demeter . . . . .	1889
The Foresters . . . . .	1892

## AUTHORITIES

Stopford Brooke. Tennyson.	
Salt, H. S. Tennyson as a Thinker (London: W. Reeves)	1893
Shepherd, R. H. Bibliography of Tennyson (London)	1896
Waugh, A. A Study of Tennyson's Life.	

Two Essays on Tennyson, by R. H. Hutton. "Contemporary Thought and Thinkers," and an essay in "Literary Essays." Hutton.

## BROWNING

1812-1889

Born at Camberwell . . . . .	May 7	1812
School at Peckham . . . . .		1822-26
Attends Classes at University College, London . . . . .		1823-30
Marriage with Elizabeth Barrett . . . . .		1846
Departure to Paris and Italy . . . . .		1846
Death of Mrs. Browning . . . . .		1861
Death . . . . .	December 12	1889

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Pauline . . . . .	1833
Paracelsus . . . . .	1835
Strafford . . . . .	1837
Sordello . . . . .	1840
Pippa Passes . . . . .	1841
King Victor and King Charles . . . . .	1842
Dramatic Lyrics . . . . .	1842
Return of the Druses . . . . .	1843
A Blot in the 'Scutcheon . . . . .	1843
Colombe's Birthday . . . . .	1844
Dramatic Romances and Lyrics . . . . .	1845
Lúria: A Soul's Tragedy . . . . .	1846
Christmas Eve and Easter Day . . . . .	1850
Introductory Essay to Letters of Shelley . . . . .	1852
Men and Women. Vols. I. and II. . . . .	1855
Dramatis Personæ . . . . .	1864
Ring and The Book . . . . .	1863-69
Balaustion's Adventure . . . . .	1871
Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangan . . . . .	1871
Fifine at the Fair . . . . .	1872
Red Cotton Night-cap Country . . . . .	1873
Aristophanes' Apology . . . . .	1875
The Inn Album . . . . .	1875
Pacchiarotto and other Poems . . . . .	1876
Agamemnon of Æschylus . . . . .	1877
La Saisiaz: Two Poets of Croisie . . . . .	1878
Dramatic Idylls . . . . .	1879-80
Jocoseria . . . . .	1883

Ferishtah's Fancies . . . . .	1884
Parleyings with Certain People . . . . .	1887
Asolando . . . . .	1890

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*Critical—*

E. Berdoe. The Browning Cyclopædia . . . . .	1897
E. Berdoe. Browning's Message to his Time . . . . .	1897
B. Cooke. Introduction to Browning.	
E. Dowden. Mr. Tennyson and Mr. Browning . . . . .	1863
B. M. Burridge. Browning as Exponent of Philosophy . . . . .	1893
J. T. Nettleship. Browning: Essays.	
A. Symons. Introduction to Study of Browning.	
Henry Jones. Browning as Philosophical and Religious Teacher.	

Gosse, E. W. Browning: Personalia.	
Orr, Mrs. Life and Letters of Browning.	
Sharp, W. Life of Browning ("Great Writers" series).	

## GEORGE ELIOT

(1819-1880)

Born at Arbury, Warwick . . . . .	1819
Left School . . . . .	1835
Death of her mother . . . . .	1836
Break from Methodism . . . . .	1842
Travels on Continent with the Brays on death of her father	1849
Assistant Editor of <i>Westminster Review</i> . . . . .	1851
Connection with G. H. Lewes . . . . .	1854
Death of Lewes . . . . .	1878
Marries J. W. Cross . . . . .	May 6 1880
Death . . . . .	December 22 1880

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Translation of Strauss' "Life of Jesus" . . . . .	1846
" " Feuerbach's "Essence of Christianity" . . . . .	1854
Scenes of Clerical Life . . . . .	1858
Adam Bede . . . . .	1859
Mill on the Floss . . . . .	1860
Silas Marner . . . . .	1861
Romola . . . . .	1863
Felix Holt . . . . .	1866
Spanish Gypsy . . . . .	1868
Agatha: a Poem . . . . .	1869
Middlemarch . . . . .	1872
Jubal, and other Poems . . . . .	1876
Daniel Deronda.	
Theophrastus Such . . . . .	1879

## AUTHORITIES

Life of George Eliot. By J. W. Cross . . . . .	1884
George Eliot. ("Eminent Women" series.) Mathilde Blind.	

Charles Bray's Autobiography.

"Dictionary of National Biography." Article by Leslie

Stephen, and Essay in "Hours in a Library."

George Eliot. ("Great Writers" series.) O. Browning.

George Eliot as Author. Hutton, R. H.

George Eliot's Life and Letters. Hutton, R. H.

(Two Essays in "Modern Guides of English Thought.")

## RUSKIN

(1819- )

Born at Hunter Street, Bloomsbury . . . . .	February 8	1819
Christ Church, Oxford (Pass Degree) . . . . .		1836-40
Recited Newdigate at Commemoration . . . . .		1839
Italy . . . . .		1840
Marriage at Perth . . . . .		1848
Pre-Raphaelitism . . . . .		1851-53
Edinburgh Lectures . . . . .		1853-54
Working Men's College . . . . .		1854-55
Rede Lecture, Cambridge . . . . .		1867
Elected Slade Professor, Oxford . . . . .		1870
Lord Rector of St. Andrew's University . . . . .		1871
Re-elected Slade Professor . . . . .		1873
" " " . . . . .		1876
Return to Oxford . . . . .		1883

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Months and the Last Smile ("Friendship's Offering")	1836-37
Salsette and Elephanta—Newdigate Prize Poem . . . . .	1839
Contributions to "Friendship's Offering" . . . . .	1838-44
Modern Painters, I. . . . .	1843
" " II. . . . .	1846
Seven Lamps of Architecture . . . . .	1849
"Poems, J. R." . . . . .	1850
King of the Golden River . . . . .	1851
Stones of Venice, I. . . . .	1851
Examples of Architecture of Venice . . . . .	1851
Notes on Construction of Sheepfolds . . . . .	1851
Pre-Raphaelitism . . . . .	1851
Stones of Venice, II., III. . . . .	1853
Lectures on Architecture and Painting . . . . .	1854
Modern Painters, III., IV. . . . .	1856
Harbours of England . . . . .	1856
Elements of Drawing . . . . .	1857
Political Economy of Art . . . . .	1857
The Two Paths . . . . .	1859
Elements of Perspective. . . . .	1859
Modern Painters, V. . . . .	1860
Unto this Last . . . . .	1862
Munera Pulveris . . . . .	1862-63
Sesame and Lilies . . . . .	1865
Ethics of the Dust . . . . .	1866
Crown of Wild Olive . . . . .	1866

Time and Tide . . . . .	1867
Queen of the Air . . . . .	1869
Lectures on Art . . . . .	1870
Fors Clavigera . . . . .	1871-84
Aratra Pentelici . . . . .	1872
Relation between Michael Angelo and Tintoret . . . . .	1872
The Eagle's Nest . . . . .	1872
Ariadne Florentina . . . . .	1873
Val d'Arno . . . . .	1874
Mornings in Florence . . . . .	1875-77
Proserpina . . . . .	1875-86
Deucalion . . . . .	1875-83
St. Mark's Rest . . . . .	1877-84
Laws of Fésolé . . . . .	1877-78
Elements of English Prosody . . . . .	1880
Arrows of the Chace . . . . .	1880
Bible of Amiens . . . . .	1880-85
The Art of England . . . . .	1883
Storm Cloud of the Nineteenth Century . . . . .	1884
Pleasures of England . . . . .	1884-85
On the Old Road . . . . .	1885
Præterita, Dilecta . . . . .	1885-89
Hortus Inclusus . . . . .	1887

## AUTHORITIES

Life and Work of John Ruskin. W. G. Collingwood, 2 vols.  
 Ruskin's "Præterita" and "Dilecta."  
 Art Teaching of John Ruskin, Collingwood.

## WALT WHITMAN

(1819-1892)

Born at West Hills . . . . .	1819
At public schools (Brooklyn) . . . . .	1825-30
Lawyer's office . . . . .	1831-32
Printing office . . . . .	1833-34
Teaching country schools . . . . .	1836-37
Printing, etc., in New York . . . . .	1840-45
Editing <i>Eagle</i> , daily, (Brooklyn) . . . . .	1846-47
On editorial staff, <i>Crescent</i> , New Orleans . . . . .	1848-49
Publishing the <i>Freeman</i> in Brooklyn . . . . .	1850
Carpentering and House Building . . . . .	1851-54
Tending the wounded. Field of War and Hospitals. . . . .	1862-64
Government Clerk . . . . .	1865
Attorney General's Department, Washington . . . . .	1868-70
Prostrated by paralysis, Camden . . . . .	1873-75
Health improved . . . . .	1877-78
Death . . . . .	March 27 1892

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

First issue of "Leaves of Grass" (Small 4to., 94 pages) . . . . .	1855
Second " " " ( " 16mo., 384 pages) . . . . .	1856
Third " " " (456 pages, 12mo.) . . . . .	1860
Fourth Edition of "Leaves of Grass" . . . . .	1867



Fifth issue of "Leaves of Grass" (includes "Drum Taps")	1871
Sixth " " " " " " " " " "	1876
Seventh issue of "Leaves of Grass" . . . . .	1881
Eighth issue of "Leaves of Grass" . . . . .	1882-83
Prose Writings: Specimen Days, and Collect . . . . .	1882-83

## AUTHORITIES

Walt Whitman. By R. M. Bucke.	
R. L. Stevenson: "Whitman"—Men and Books.	
Whitman's "Specimen Days."	
Whitman: a Study, J. A. Symonds.	
O. Triggs: "Browning and Whitman."	
Whitman. W. Clarke.	
In <i>re</i> Walt Whitman. Traubel, etc.	
J. Burroughs: Notes on Walt Whitman, and Whitman, a Study.	
Kennedy, W. S.: Reminiscences of Whitman.	

## WILLIAM MORRIS

(1834-96)

Born at Walthamstow . . . . .	March 24	1834
Educated at Forest School, Walthamstow, and Marlborough.		
Exeter College, Oxford . . . . .		1852-56
Morris & Co.'s factory established . . . . .		1863
A contributor to The Commonweal . . . . .		1885-90
The Kelmscott Press established . . . . .		1892
Death . . . . .	October 3	1896

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

<i>Oxford and Cambridge Magazine</i> . . . . .	1856
Sir Galahad . . . . .	1858
Defence of Guenevere . . . . .	1858
Life and Death of Jason . . . . .	1867
Earthly Paradise . . . . .	1868-70
Grettis Saga . . . . .	1869
Völsunga Saga . . . . .	1870
Love is Enough . . . . .	1873
Three Northern Love Stories . . . . .	1875
Æneids of Virgil . . . . .	1876
Two Sides of the River . . . . .	1876
Sigurd the Volsung . . . . .	1877
Hopes and Fears for Art . . . . .	1882
Summary of the Principles of Socialism (with H. M. Hyndman) . . . . .	1884
Odyssey of Homer . . . . .	1887
Signs of Change . . . . .	1888
Dream of John Ball and a King's Lesson . . . . .	1888
The House of the Wolfings . . . . .	1889
The Roots of the Mountains . . . . .	1890
The Legend of "The Briar Rose" . . . . .	1890
The Story of the Glittering Plain . . . . .	1891
News from Nowhere . . . . .	1891
Poems by the Way . . . . .	1891

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Saga Library . . . . .	1891-95
Arts and Crafts Essays . . . . .	1893
Ordination of Knighthood. (Trans.) . . . . .	1893
King Florus and Fair Jehane . . . . .	1893
Socialism, Growth and Outcome (with Belfort Bax) . . . . .	1893
Gothic Architecture . . . . .	1893
Tale of the Emperor Constans . . . . .	1894
Friendship of Amis and Amile . . . . .	1894
The Wood beyond the World . . . . .	1895
Child Christopher and Fair Goldilind . . . . .	1895
Tale of Beowulf . . . . .	1895
Well at the World's End . . . . .	1896
The Water of the Wondrous Isles . . . . .	1896
The Sundering Flood . . . . .	1896

## AUTHORITIES

Temple Scott. Bibliography of Morris' Works. (Bell.) . . . . .	1897
A. Vallance. The Art of William Morris . . . . .	1897
A. Vallance. William Morris—Art, Writings and Life . . . . .	

## TOLSTOY

(1828- )

Born near Tula . . . . .	Aug. 28	1828
Student at University of Kazan . . . . .		1843
Enlistment as Ensign in Artillery . . . . .		1851
Divisional Commander in the Crimea . . . . .		1855
Visits to Germany, France, England and Italy . . . . .		1857
Marriage with Miss Behrs . . . . .		1862
Conversion . . . . .		1874-79
Makes over his estates to wife and children . . . . .		1892

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Childhood. . . . .	1852
The Invaders . . . . .	1852
The Cossacks . . . . .	1852
Boyhood . . . . .	1854
Youth . . . . .	1855-57
Family Happiness . . . . .	1859
War and Peace . . . . .	1864-69
Children's Stories . . . . .	1869-72
Anna Karenina . . . . .	1873-76
My Confession . . . . .	1879-82
The Gospels Translated, Compared, and Harmonised . . . . .	1880-82
What Men Live By . . . . .	1881
My Religion . . . . .	1884
The Death of Ivan Ilyitch . . . . .	1884-86
Popular Tales . . . . .	1885
Popular Legends . . . . .	1886
Life . . . . .	1887
Work While You have Light . . . . .	1888
The Kreutzer Sonata . . . . .	1889
The Kingdom of God is Within You . . . . .	1893
Master and Man . . . . .	1895

What is Art? . . . . .	1898
The Christian Teaching . . . . .	1898

## AUTHORITIES

- Tolstoy's "Childhood," "Boyhood," and "Youth."  
 Tolstoy's "My Confession."  
 C. A. Behrs. Recollections of Count Tolstoy (Heinemann).  
 G. H. Perris. Leo Tolstoy. (Fisher Unwin.)  
 E. M. De Vogüé. An Essay on Tolstoi in "Russian Novelists." (Translated by J. L. Edmunds. Boston: D. Lothrop Company.  
 An Essay on Tolstoy in the New Spirit. Havelock Ellis, (Walter Scott).

## IBSEN

(1828- )

Born at Skien . . . . .	March 20	1828
Apothecary's Assistant at Grimstad . . . . .		1844-50
Christiania Student of Medicine; Co-operates with Abildgaard and Thrane in Revolutionary Movement; and with Botten-Hansen and Vinje, in bringing out weekly paper, <i>The Man</i> . . . . .		1850
Manager of National Theatre, Bergen . . . . .		1851-57
Director of Norwegian Theatre, Christiania. . . . .		1857
Marriage . . . . .		1858
Departure from Christiania for Rome . . . . .		1864
Residence at Munich . . . . .		1871
Return to Christiania . . . . .		1871

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Katilina . . . . .	1850
"The Warrior's Mound" . . . . .	1851
The Banquet of Solhang . . . . .	1855
Mistress Inger at Östråt . . . . .	1857
Warriors at Helgeland . . . . .	1858
Love's Comedy . . . . .	1862
The Pretenders . . . . .	1863
A Brother in Need . . . . .	1864
Brand . . . . .	1866
Peer Gynt . . . . .	1867
The League of Youth (De Unges Forbund) . . . . .	1867
Emperor and Galilean . . . . .	1871
Pillars of Society . . . . .	1877
A Doll's House . . . . .	1879
Ghosts . . . . .	1881
Enemy of the People . . . . .	1882
Wild Duck . . . . .	1884
Rosmersholm . . . . .	1886
Lady from the Sea . . . . .	1888
Hedda Gabler . . . . .	1890
Master Builder . . . . .	1892
Little Eyolf . . . . .	1894
John Gabriel Borkman . . . . .	1897

## AUTHORITIES

- Life of Henrik Ibsen. Jaeger (translated Clara Bell).  
(London: W. Heinemann.)  
Four Lectures on Ibsen by P. H. Wicksteed.  
The New Spirit, by Havelock Ellis, article on Ibsen.  
(London: Walter Scott.)  
Ibsen's Prose Dramas—edited by W. Archer.  
Prefatory Note to "Rosmersholm," by W. Archer.  
Introduction to "The Lady from the Sea," by E. W.  
Gosse.





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